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THE PORO SOCIETY AS AN ARBITER OF CULTURE

(*A Note on Cultural Inter-penetration*)

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INTRODUCTION

IN SIERRA LEONE, many of the functions, which the family performs in other parts of West Africa, are the prerogative of secret societies. This applies particularly to the training and general "socialization" of the young, and only less so in certain religious and quasi-religious spheres. Societies like the Poro, the Wunde, and the Sande or Bundu, and in a more specialized and subsidiary sense, the Humoi and the Njaye, provide a specific link with the supernatural world which is more than complementary to the personal, but relatively limited, role of the ancestors. Their efficacy is due very largely to the fact that society interests and activities are defined in terms of community, rather than lineage or clan, and extend far beyond it. Society indoctrination sets the seal on attitudes and reciprocal behaviour between the sexes, while affording an outlet, at the same time, for common recreation and entertainment. Politically, too, the secret society is, to a large extent, a substitute for the highly organized type of governmental machinery found further east. It indicates that social cohesion may be developed over a wide area, even in the absence of a centralized administration, such as that of the Akan people of the Gold Coast.

For these reasons, Sierra Leone and the ethno-

logical region of which it is but a part, may be regarded as culturally distinctive in a way which possibly, is unique in the whole of Africa. In that region, the secret society has left its imprint on nearly every facet of life and culture of the people to an extent which it is difficult to define, except in terms of *ethos*.

The fact that Western contacts have been pressed increasingly upon the hinterland of Sierra Leone during the past fifty years adds to the significance of this point. Against the fast encroaching tide of new values and new incentives, the secret society stands almost as a solitary obstacle. Methodologically, it has certain implications for the problem of cultural change. It suggests that the parts of a culture that are least responsive to change may constitute the nexus through which the cultural pattern, as a whole, has hitherto derived its shape and renewed its vitality.

Regarded in this light, the secret is to be thought of as something more than a mere institution. It constitutes that "hard core" of culture, which in situations of rapid social change of the kind common in West Africa, it is necessary to study in detail, not as a piece of interesting "antiquarianism", but as a guide to the acculturative process.

PART I

TRADITIONAL POSITION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE PORO SOCIETY

(a) *Local explanation of its origin*

It goes almost without saying, that the most striking example of the secret society as an arbiter of culture, is to be sought in those societies where the initiation school is strongly developed. Both the Poro society and the Bundu are well known in this respect. This is partly because the Poro's closest association is with the Mende people, who constitute numerically one of the largest "tribal" groups of West Africa.¹ Whether or not the Poro actually originated with the Mende is, however, very doubtful. There are linguistic similarities with the Sherbro language in a number of cult terms,² but its diffusion from an even earlier and more distant source is, perhaps, more likely. The matter remains one for speculation. Migeod suggests that the expression "Purrus Campus", which is found on the oldest medieval maps of Ptolemy, should be translated literally as "poro bush", which is the local English term for the places where the Poro society meets.³ He thinks that this is an indication of the considerable antiquity of the Poro. A more credible, though less historical, reference to the institution occurs in the word "purrah" in the writings of various 18th century visitors to Sierra Leone.⁴

Other authors have suggested that the Poro was brought into Sierra Leone by the Vai people from Liberia; or that it spread from French Guinea into Sierra Leone with the Timné, who came as the fighting legion of the Baga from Futa Jallon.⁵ If the last is the case, it is possible that the Poro is a derivative of the still older cult of Si'mo, which Butt-Thompson claims is the foundation of other important societies, like the Egbo of Nigeria, found as far down the coast as Angola.⁶

¹ From Sierra Leone census figures, their numbers may be estimated in the neighbourhood of three-quarters of a million. This is exclusive, of course, of Mende chiefdoms in the adjacent area of Liberia.

² The Mende word for "Poro" is *Poi* meaning literally "no end; far behind".

Without discounting the value of traditional accounts of its origin, it is clear that the Poro is deeply seated in the culture of the Mende, and that so far as Sierra Leone is concerned, it antedates the tribal wars in that country. For this reason, a number of rationalized explanations of its more recent origin have to be discarded. For example, it has been suggested that the society originated out of men banding themselves together in secret to obviate slave-raiding parties from which they hid in the bush; or, that during the tribal wars, the war-chiefs found it convenient to hold their councils in the bush, where they would not be over-heard by the women, or by eaves-dropping spies of the enemy. Another, and even less likely explanation, is that it was feared at one time that pregnant women, looking on the deformed faces of individuals with syphilis, would give birth to children who were similarly deformed. It was arranged to hide such diseased people deep in the forest where they would not be seen by the women and children. One of the sufferers was appointed to speak for the others, and he gave warning of their approach when they came to beg for food. As time went on, the number thus isolated increased, and it was decided to starve them out. The method of decreasing them was not told to the women and children, and the syphilitic people died out altogether. Years afterwards, an instrument was invented to imitate the voice of such a person for the purpose of frightening the women and children.

The main characteristics of the society are, however, exemplified in two traditional accounts which are related widely among the Mende themselves. One is that the first Mende chief was very powerful and his people thought that

³ Cf. F. W. H. MIGEOD. *A View of Sierra Leone*.

⁴ Cf. Lt. JOHN MATTHEWS. *A Voyage to the River Sierra Leone*. 1875.

⁵ Cf. W. BUTT-THOMPSON. *West African Secret Societies*.

⁶ *Ibid.*

it would lead to a general disruption of the whole tribe, if his death became known. It was decided to keep the matter a secret. It so happened that the chief had an impediment which caused him to speak in a nasal tone, and so a suitable person was found to impersonate him. He was sworn to secrecy on a very powerful medicine. Gradually, others were also told, and sworn likewise.

The second, and more extensive, traditional account is, that a very long time ago, there lived a certain wealthy old man who had many wives and children. He owned a large amount of bush and the people for miles around regarded him as their "big man". Unfortunately, he contracted cancer of the nose and his voice became harsh, but musical, in tone. This was the first case known of such a disease, and the old man was put away in a forest near the town. His head wife and his youngest daughter were the only members of his family to tend him. The other "big men" of the district visited him freely to talk over important matters, but women and young people were forbidden to see him. One day, the men consulted together to usurp his lands, and they agreed to kill him, his wife, and his daughter. In order to deceive the other wives and children in the town an instrument which would produce the same tremulous sounds as his voice was devised. A wood carver hollowed out a stick and a small piece of skin was bound over its smaller end. Returning to the town, the men then informed the people that the old man had changed into a "devil", and that his wife (*Mabole*), and his daughter, (*Gbonu*) still tended him. Whenever the men wanted to make a feast, they would pretend to take the old man to visit his wives and children in the town. A brother-in-law of the man, acting as an interpreter, would herald the news of his visit, and the women and children would rush into their houses, the former clapping their hands in appreciation of it, but in great fear. Then the interpreter would announce the old man's needs; rice, goats, palm-oil, etc., and these would be amply supplied. At other times, the men would break into the barns and seize what they required for their feast.

(b) *Traditional associations*

This account recapitulates further institutional features by suggesting that the particular bush in which the old man, his wife, and daughter were buried became known as *kameihun* (*kamai*-, to meet around), because the men met there around their leader. In due course all the old man's property was acquired and the children themselves grew up to be men. It was then decided to introduce them to their father, and this constituted the first session of the society. Another bush was selected, and huts were built there to accommodate the young men, because they were not allowed to tread the sacred ground of the *kameihun*. This temporary abode was known as *kpandoinga* (*kpandohu*-, void), because it was void of the secrets of the society. One by one, the young men were introduced to their "father", impersonated by the "devil" (*ngafei*), who would be squatting on the trunk of some large tree with the pipe of office, the so-called Poro horn. Marks of membership were then cut on each youth's back.

(c) *Relation to political and other institutions*

Whatever truth there may be in these myths and rationalizations consists mainly in the atmosphere of secrecy which surrounds the society and its activities within the bush. So far as it is possible to rely on historical and semi-historical accounts of its function, the Poro seems to have been the main integrating force in Mende culture for as long a period as it is possible to re-construct the latter. By the Mende themselves its origin is regarded as supernatural. "The Poro was made by God, not by man", and in the religious sense, it has a direct connection with the spirit world through its principal "devil", and the officials who serve it. Indeed, it is possible that in earlier days, the Poro supplied that mystical quality of authority, which is apparently lacking in the purely secular figure of the Mende chief.¹ Undoubtedly, its real power resides in the spiritual force it personalizes and professes to possess.

¹ Cf. K. L. LITTLE. "Mende Political Institutions in Transition." *Africa*, Jan. 1947.

The spirit world is characterized and enacted by means of masked figures and various mechanical devices and designs. The mysterious effect is conserved by the oath of secrecy which every member, on entering, must take, and the infringement of which means sickness or even death; and by the prohibition of the sacred bush of the society to all non-members, including especially the women and children.

It is equally obvious that the connection between the society and political authority has always been very strong and that the two mutually re-inforce each other. This is shewn ritually by the fact that the *Gbeni*, which "comes out" in public only on the most important type of civil occasion, makes its appearance on the death and "coronation" of a chief. On the former occasion, the *Gbeni* proceeds to the dead man's grave and bows over it. He has to be "bought off" by a sum of money from the deceased's family. When a chief is dying, he is taken into the Poro bush for "medical" attention, and his death is subsequently announced from the roof of his house by an official of the society. It is interesting to note, however, that the chief is not buried in the Poro bush, unless he happens to be a stranger to the chiefdom concerned. He is usually buried within his own compound: it is considered that he "belongs" to all his people, including his own family.

It goes without saying that no individual can hope to occupy any office in the chiefdom without being a Poro member. The chief himself is the society's official patron in all matters external to the actual business of the society, and he is expected to uphold Poro interests, whenever they come into conflict with the views of Moslems, and even of the Government. In recognition of this, and of his position as chief, he receives, in return, a customary present from the society, whenever it holds a session. Traditionally, he was also entitled to the service of Poro "boys" (initiates) in working his rice-farm, a favour he secured by a present of tobacco to the *sowa* (chief official). Nowadays, he is expected to pay for such services in cash. On the other hand, as a result of European influence, his position in relation to the society is probably

much stronger today than it was in former times. Though the chief was always the nominal ruler, it is possible that the real power lay in the hands of Poro officials as such. It is evident that the Poro was the main agent in linking the people together, and may have transcended altogether the local authority of the smaller chiefs.

The Poro also acted as an arbitrator in chiefdom disputes, and is said to have been effective enough to put an end to them by sending an armed band of its officials, masked as "devils", against the party which refused its decision. The Mende Rising of 1898, it is worth remembering, was organized and finally set in motion by the Poro war sign—a burned palm leaf—which was sent from chief to chief and from country to country. The warriors taking part wore the Poro palm leaf token, wound round neck and wrist. Prior to the British administration, the Poro promulgated general laws, regulated trading practices, and was undoubtedly the means by which a uniform system of government and a uniform set of customs was possible among a large number of isolated and remotely scattered communities. One way by which communal action was effected on such a wide scale was by placing the whole country under Poro oath, before the actual object of the oath was known. After this, everyone was bound to adhere to whatever plans had been decided upon in the inner bush. Hence, the expression used in this connection was *ngo yela* ("one word", or, "unity"). The Poro sign, a spiral of ferns, was a powerful prohibition which brought sickness or death to any one who disregarded it. This sign was used to ban the use of fishing grounds at certain seasons, lest it should interfere with cultivation of necessary food crops. The society also fixed prices at which various commodities should be sold,¹ and at which certain services, for instance, a day's load-carrying, should be performed.

The Poro helped to maintain the authority of secular rule by decreeing that disputes affecting important members of the community should be

¹ Brown reported quite recently that the Poro operates its own currency and regulates trading practices in parts of Liberia. Cf. G. W. BROWN. *The Poro in Modern Business*.

heard in the bush by a Poro tribunal, the identity of whose president remained secret.¹ No chief, and this point is equally significant to-day, as in former times, could be appointed without Poro approval, and the society had, inevitably, the major voice in his selection. With Poro support, it is doubtful if there was any limit to autocratic rule, and it is probable that individual chiefs, like Nyagua of Panguma, who held wide sway, owed most of their success to the use they were able to make of Poro organization.

(d) *Structure of the Society*

It is obvious that, culturally speaking, the Poro remains, to-day, the principal conservator and champion of the traditional ways of life. Nor is this surprising, since its primary function is to equip every Mende man for the part he is to play in community life. In this respect, however, it is necessary to distinguish between two different aspects of the society. In the primary and social sense, it provides merely a course of training which, though symbolical as well as practical, does not carry the initiate beyond a very junior stage in society affairs. All control of society matters is vested in the senior members. The latter consist of hereditary officials and those who have risen to a position of seniority by a further and fairly extensive period of instruction. There is, actually, no permanently existing Poro in the sense of a continuous and uninterrupted round of society activities. Members are called together at indefinite times for the attainment of specific objects, and when these objects have been attained, the "poro"² breaks up or dissolves. Even the annual initiation school for new members is no exception to this rule or principle.

Nor does the Poro possess any centralized form of organization.³ It is called together and organized locally through the medium of what, for lack of a better term, might be called "lodges". These "lodges" are quite independent of each

other, so far as their administration and specific activities are concerned. At the same time, they operate along lines and carry out rituals and practices which are substantially the same all over Mende country. In other words, if an individual has been initiated in one area, he will be admitted to a society gathering any where else and according to his status as a Poro man, may participate fully in whatever is going on in the place he visits. The general rule is for every important town, and even village, to make its own "poro". Sometimes, the chief will call a general meeting of Poro people in his chiefdom when a matter of particular importance arises, which concerns either the society or the chiefdom.

As already indicated, status and position in the society depend upon the individual successfully undertaking a further course of training which enables him to pass into a higher grade. Any one of male sex may attain a higher grade, irrespective of his social rank, though the leading officials, the *Gbeima* (most senior), and the *Sowa*, who comes next, hold their positions through hereditary right. Women, who are initiated, become members of the society in the same way as a man, but they are not allowed to proceed to any higher grades and, with one exception, are not allowed to occupy any official posts. The fees, which every initiate must pay and which are due, also, from members moving up to a senior grade, are paid to the officials and distributed among the senior members. The latter organize and are responsible for training given in the bush. The duty of junior members is simply to implement whatever decision is arrived at by the elders. They are never consulted by the "senior Poro", and have no power to initiate Poro action in any form. These junior, or ordinary, members of the Poro are known as *So hinga* ("those who are entitled to procreate"). Until he has been initiated in the society, no Mende man is considered mature and is not allowed to marry or have sexual relations

¹ This practice, also is still common. *Man*, Jan. 1937, No. 3.

² There is a fairly clear, but subtle, distinction to be made between the Poro as a society or general institution, and a "poro", which is a gathering of Poro members called together for a specific object,

hence the use of a small letter in the latter case.

³ Compare this description of the political functions of the Poro and its structure with G. W. Harley's account of the Poro in Liberia. G. W. HARLEY, "Notes on the Poro in Liberia", *Papers of the Peabody Museum*, Vol. XIX, No. 2.

with a woman. Maturity, in this sense, is irrespective of the biological age of the individual. Initiation makes the individual a man, or more accurately, a male.

(e) *Women as members*

Women are admitted as members under various conditions. There are certain individuals, known as *Sami*, who have an hereditary connection with the society and who, irrespective of their sex, must be initiated. Any woman who becomes a paramount chief must also be initiated, but she remains a junior member. Women who suffer from barrenness may be initiated as a means of obtaining a cure. Barrenness is regarded as the result of some infringement of Poro rules, and the woman concerned is escorted into the society's bush by a young boy, known as *ngegba* (*ngi gba*—I am different). On their arrival, the Poro spirits are invoked and asked to release the woman from the curse they have laid upon her, and to pass it onto the boy. Such a woman is then called *bolemui* from *Mabole*, the only woman official of the society, who herself is responsible for the invocation. The Poro session on such an occasion lasts only a very short time, perhaps from 5 a.m. to 4 p.m., and both the *bolemui* and the *ngegba* are given only a very elementary form of instruction and a few cuts on their backs, as marks of membership. In the course of time, however, the *ngegba* becomes a full Poro man.

The office of the *Mabole*, according to tradition, derives from the first Poro "devil", the old man mentioned above. Before he was put to death he decreed that a woman should be co-opted in the society in memory of his wife, who had this name. The *Mabole*'s duty is to take part in certain ceremonies, additional to the one just described, and to act as matron to the young initiates during their course of training in the bush. She is held in the highest respect and, when the Poro session is over, she takes charge of the "devil's" pipe and the razor, which is used for marking the initiates. She hides them securely above the rafters of her house in the town. Originally, it is claimed, no woman other than the *Mabole* was admitted. Any woman who learned a Poro secret, or, who

knowingly or unknowingly trespassed on Poro bush was severely punished along with members of her family. The "devil" rushed to her house, followed by an angry crowd of members, razed it to the ground, and cleared away all the rubble so that no trace of it was left. The victim herself was then taken into the bush and roughly treated. Finally, her legs were tied to two trees which had been bent towards each other and which were then allowed to straighten up, tearing her apart. Nowadays, however, such women are forced merely to undergo initiation. They retain their membership of the *Sande*, the women's society, of which no man may become a member. Other women are strictly excluded from any form of contact with the Poro, and no woman may see the dead body of a woman, who is a member, or of an important male member of the society.

(f) *Spirits of the Society*

The paraphernalia of the society, drums, medicines, masks, etc., are usually kept in a house in the town. In addition to the principal "devil", the *Gbeni*, there are several subsidiary "devils" which, however, do not possess the terrifying qualities of the *Gbeni*. These are the *Ngafagoti*, the *Yavei*, the *Gobai*, and the *Dagbadai*. The *Gbeni* may be seen only by society members and even they are in danger, if they approach too near to him. The *Gbeni*'s costume consists of cloth and leather. He wears a leopard skin, and carries medicines and glass accoutrement in addition to his wooden mask. As already mentioned, the *Gbeni* appears in public only on the most important occasions. His coming is announced by the *Wujei*, who precedes his appearance from the bush, and by the long, drawn out cry which is a characteristic Poro call. Each "devil" is attended by a number of followers; those of the *Gbeni* being the smartest Poro boys. There are attendants (*mboleisia*), a broom-holder (*kpangbahoumoi*) who sweeps the road in front of the "devil", drummers (*mbili-yeisia*), a bugler (*buvemoi*), and a number of individuals beating sticks (*kokondeiyai-bla*). The followers wear head ties, headdresses of animal skin, and a head tie is wrapped round the body in the

form of a tunic: short trousers of country cloth are also worn. The *Gbeni* is "pulled" out of the bush by the *mbolesia*, and the crowd following turns about according to the way the "devil" faces, in order to avoid coming in front of him. The "devils" are mainly for amusement. They usually remain out and dance after the *Gbeni* has retired. The *Dagbadaii*, however, is also dangerous from the point of view of women and children. Its function is largely satirical. Accompanied by its followers, it parades the town and chants comments on the conduct of any townspeople, including notabilities, against whom there is any popular grievance or complaint. Its followers reply in chorus and repeat the "devil's" words, which, as is the general rule, are uttered as if through a megaphone. Special drums are used in connection with Poro business, and while the society is in session no other drums may be beaten in the town.

(g) *Secret and ritual tests*

Poro "secrets" include an elaborate set of signs and pass-words. Some of these are prohibitions, warning non-members off the society's preserves. For example, a spiral of green creeper or fern, known as *ndimomoi*, is placed at the outer gate of the entrance to the sacred bush. A green leaf is for peace and a burned palm leaf is a sign of war. A bunch of leaves and a double pyramid are also used. Members recognize each other by the use of certain phrases and inflections of the voice, and by more elaborate tests, which consist of set questions and answers. These are of a proverbial kind and involve various implications of Poro ritual. They may be exemplified by the following questions put by the "last boy" to a stranger seeking to enter the sacred bush, and by the latter's replies: (The "last boy" to be initiated at a particular session is given the task of "testing" new comers.)

"*Gbo sokoti le ?*" (What is *sokoti* ?)

"—*Sokoti hindo hali mia.*" (*Sokoti* is a man's society.)

The word *numo* is also given as reply to *sokoti*.

"*Gbele ngeya yakpe mia nya woma ?*" (Why have I only one mark on my back ?)

"—*Jwa Gbonu mia ange.*" (Because I am the *Gbonu*.)

The word *ngeya* means "a string" and is taken in the question to signify the Poro marking, which appears like a string or rope tracing on the member's back. The *Gbonu*, the last boy to enter the bush at time of initiation gets a single mark, different from that of his companions. A woman, entering, also gets a similar mark. The word *gbonu* means "pet". He is treated more lightly than the others. The traditional explanation is that *Gbonu* was the daughter of the old man and he decreed that for his sake the last initiate in a session should be treated with kindness and never set to work like the other boys.

"*Bi hale mi lo ?*" (Where did you receive the Poro ?)

"—*Gbiwi bu*, or, *Foloi ya.*" (In the darkness, or, in the light.)

The Poro marks are given by raising the flesh by a hook, or needle. If the member received his marks by means of a hook, he should say: "*Gbiwi bu*", because the hook is dark as compared with a needle.

"*Gbo tuli gbandinga le ?*" (What is the *kpanduinga* rat ?)

"—*Ngeyeisia.*" (The marks, or rather, the blood which drops from the cuts.)

The rat, known as *tuli*, emits an unpleasant odour. The Poro cuts, when treated with native medicine, are said to give a similar smell:

"*Ngafei a yi mi lo ?*" (Where does the "devil" sleep ?)

"—*Njasei hu.*" (In the thatch.)

The Poro horn, which is used to impersonate the voice of the "devil" is made by means of a lizard skin, which is drawn across a hole in the point of an animal's horn. As the lizard is seen usually in the thatch, the "devil" is said to sleep there.

"*Ngafei le ha, yo a ngi gbowu ?*" (When the "devil" dies, who will bury him ?)

"—*Gilisia.*" (The ants.)

The ants will eat the lizard when it has died.

"Ngafei a luva mi lo?" (Where will the "devil" spend the day?)

"Kpiti hu." (In the grass.)

The lizard is generally seen in the grass.

"Gbo ngafa ne le?" (What is the tongue of the "devil"?)

"Nduvui kaloi hu yila va. (The raffia used for wiping the food plates.)

The initiates are fed in the bush by their parents. The latter give the rice to an old member to take into the bush. They are said to be giving rice not to the boys, but to the "devil", who has "chopped" (i.e. "eaten") the boys. Before the plates are returned, they are thoroughly wiped with raffia, and the "devil" is said to have licked them. Hence, the raffia is the "devil's" tongue.

"Gbo ngafa yamei le?" (What is the "devil's" eye?)

"—So hisia." (The old members.)

The old members are on the watch for any breach of Poro law.

(h) *The sacred bush*

The "sacred" bush of the society is usually adjacent to the town, and is invariably surrounded by high cotton trees which give to the place an

appearance of both majesty and mystery. This spot, as already mentioned, is known as the *kameihun*, and it is here that members meet to discuss society business. In the heart of the *kameihun* is the *palihun* (in the deep¹). This is a clearing, where are four large stones, which mark the place where the founder of the particular bush was buried. It is sacrilege to enter this place wearing any kind of footwear,² because it is here that prayers are offered to the spirits of the society and that the most important ceremonies, including the "passing out" ceremony in connection with new members, are performed. The *kameihun* also contains the graves of past leaders and notable members of the society. Its establishment entails special rites which, in the old days, are said to have included a human sacrifice of a man and a woman. They were buried in a standing position and the grave was marked with the stones mentioned above. Many goats and fowls were also killed, and a great feast took place amidst general rejoicing. The officiating "priest" was the oldest man in the community, preferably a warrior. After this, the spot was held for ever in the greatest veneration, and only the *Sowa* and the *Mabole* could tread this particular ground.

PART II

THE INITIATION "SCHOOL"

(a) *Preparation of the camp*

Nowadays, the initiation of new members constitutes the main activity of the Poro. A full session lasts from November, throughout the dry season, until May, and during this period several separate sets of initiates may be taken. New initiates do not remain in the bush for more than a few weeks, as a general rule, and in the case of school boys the time may be even shorter. Formerly, individuals might attend in the bush for a course of instruction which lasted several

years, but the tendency now is, apparently, to restrict proceedings to little more than the bare requirements of initiation. A boy usually enters at puberty, though even younger lads be taken, and there is nothing to prevent an adult person joining at the same time. The session is inaugurated by the senior members offering a sacrifice in the bush, in order to obtain the favour of the spirits. Then, a present is taken to the paramount chief, requesting his approval and patronage for the forthcoming session. The bush, close to the permanent

members live on the spot.

² The possibility of this prohibition being due to Moslem influence should not be overlooked.

¹ The deep parts of the rivers and of the sea are believed to be the abode of the spirits of the dead. The term therefore indicates that the spirits of deceased

and sacred premises of the society, is cleared as a temporary camp (the *kpanduinga*), and huts are put up to accommodate the initiates. There are no rites in connection with this operation and the camp can be moved about quite freely, but so long as the Poro is in session the ground in question is strictly out of bounds to non-members. Women who may be in the neighbourhood must give warning of their approach by clapping their hands. A road is then cut from this place to the town. Tall poles, connected to each other by ropes to which moss is tied, are erected along it, and at the spot where this passage joins the main road, the Poro sign, known as *ndimomoi*, is placed. In the meantime, the parents of the candidates have been preparing food for them.

(b) *Entry to the "school"*

On the eve of the session, Poro members meet in their house (*ngafa welei*) in town. It serves as a temporary residence and meeting place, and is a small round house with a mat screening the entrance in place of a door. The Poro men go round the town saying: 'We will dance to-night'. Then the "devil" himself is heard leaving the bush. He enters the town making harsh nasal sounds, like someone groaning. His followers go from house to house taking out those who are to be initiated. The latter are escorted to the bush and on arriving at the mat which hides its entrance from the road, they are met by an official. He puts a number of questions to which the appropriate answer is always "Yes". "Could you carry water in a basket?", "Could you up-root a full grown palm tree with your bare hands?", etc. The officials then make as if to pull the candidates inside. The latter resists, but is drawn in at the third attempt. In the meantime, a great deal of drumming and noise is going on inside. It increases as he enters, and he is welcomed with shouts. He hands over his initiation fee, which consisted traditionally of a leaf of tobacco but is paid, nowadays, in cash, often amounting to as much as several pounds.

The boys, who are now standing in a ring, are greeted by the cry: "*Sokoti*". They reply: "*Numo*". This is repeated three times. One of

the first sights they see is an official with the "devil's" pipe in his hand. This individual does not wear any distinctive costume, but on the various occasions during the initiation period, when the "devil" visits the town, he is its impersonator. The pipe is made out of cow horn, or is a curved stick with a hole in it. The pointed end has been pierced, covered with lizard skin, and a hole, through which the performer blows, has been cut through the skin. One horn of this kind is used in connection with initiation, and another kind is used by older members. The harsh nasal sound mentioned above is produced by this instrument. The effect is as if a wooden megaphone has been used. By stationing a number of men in different parts of the bush, each of whom speaks, in turn, through his horn, the effect is created of the "devil lying about the bush", as it is explained to non-members.

(c) *The marking ceremony*

Every boy must be circumcised before he is initiated, but circumcision plays no part in the initiation rite itself. If necessary, the former operation is carried out on the spot before the marks of membership are given. The boys are marked on their backs, according to the order in which they enter the bush. The first boy is known as *ndoinje*; the second as *lavalie*; the third as *petuja*; and the last, as mentioned above, as *gbonu*. Each boy is seized in turn by a number of the men. He is stripped naked and his clothes kept to wipe away the blood which flows from the cuts. Then he is thrown roughly on to the ground, and the appropriate marks are made, either by a hook, which raises the skin, or by a razor. If he shows fright, or tries to run away, his head is pushed into a hole which has already been dug for the purpose. During the operation, the "devil" plays loudly on his pipe and there is a clapping of hands, which drowns the noise of the boys' cries and prevents them being overheard by passers-by, especially women and children.

The initiation rite and the whole time spent in the bush, which follows it, is an important example of *rite de passage*. The young initiate is supposed to be "swallowed" by the "devil" when he enters,

and separation from his parents and kinsfolk signifies his death. The marks on his back symbolize the "devil's" teeth. At the end of his time, he is "delivered" by the "devil" and "re-born". The period in the bush marks his transition from boyhood to manhood, and as a result of the experience he emerges a fully fledged member of Mende society. The training he receives is symbolical as well as practical. It inculcates him with the spirit as well as the rules of the part he has to play as a man. It aims at teaching him self-discipline, and to rely on himself. He learns how to work co-operatively and to take orders from others.

(d) *The training*

While in the bush, the boys wear a garment of red netting. They must sleep in the bush, but are allowed out during the day-time, when not undergoing instruction, after the initial ceremony. They carry pipes about with them and utter wild cries to give warning of their approach. As a practical example of their training, the boys are allowed no modern equipment. Their material requirements, including part of their food, must be provided by themselves. They start by lighting a fire when darkness falls, and for the first night special songs are sung and no one is allowed to sleep. The next morning, the work is shared out, after the boys have been sorted out for training in terms of groups of the same size and age. The first boy who entered delegates the tasks. The second helps to make the "devil's" pipes. The third is to sweep out the camp every morning. The fourth is to boil water for the elders any time it is required.

The boys are expected to bear hardship without complaint and to grow accustomed to it. They sleep at night on a bed of sticks under covering clothes which have been soaked in water, and they remain out of doors, if it rains. The singing and drumming lasts until one or two o'clock in the morning and the boys are awakened again

at dawn. They are expected to get up and sing any time they are called. According to some informants, training in hardihood also includes a certain amount of punishment play which is administered by the elders. Impossible requests are made jokingly to the boys as an excuse for inflicting pain on them and no crying is allowed. Sometimes, too, it is alleged, the boys are encouraged to steal food from neighbouring farms during the night-time, and to bring the spoils to the *Sowa* in the morning. The accusation of cruelty is generally denied, but other Poro members admit that certain amount of stealing is carried out by the boys. They claim that it is severely punished, if detested, and is usually the result of some of the boys, whose parents are poor, going short of supplies from their homes.¹ Occasionally, boys, whose family cannot afford the fees demanded, work their way by doing jobs during the day-time on neighbouring farms. The money they earn goes to the officials.

In general, the training provided varies according to the length of time the boys are able to remain in the bush. It may include a certain amount of native law and custom, exemplified by the holding of mock courts and trials, in which the boys enact the roles of their elders. Boys who can afford to stay for a length of time learn a good deal about native crafts as well as the ordinary duties of a grown man, such as "brushing" and other farming operations, and cleaning roads. Individual specialists at making raffia clothes, basketry nets, etc., sometimes go into the bush with the boys and help them to become proficient in the particular craft they choose. Bridge-building, the making and setting of traps for animals and fish, are also taught. On the social side, the boys learn drumming and to sing the special Poro songs. They practise somersaults and acrobatics, and all together their experiences implant a strong sense of comradeship. The drumming and dancing of the Poro boys may be heard throughout the dry season in such songs as the following :-

¹ It is also alleged by some individuals, who themselves have passed through Poro, that immoral practices are taught. Instruction in matters of sex is part of the ordinary training, but it is said to be amplified, on occasion, by punishments involving sexual acts

on the ground, which are publicly practised for the amusement of both old and young. Whilst these accusations may hold good in specific instances, there is no reason to suppose that such practices are a general feature of the ordinary Poro "school".

Oh, gbengi waa leingaa — oh! (Let me jump into the fire — o!)

Jompo gbey lo nyahangaa—bongei bge lo ta ta henga. (Bush frogs are like women—they squat on ponds.)

Gbengben nyeké ndoli nya ngotua kpu kwoma!

(Watching [from the bush] the waists of women in the dance has confused me!)

Poi lapo a gongo mee pèle ganu ma, gongo a fae!

(When the Poro boy meets grass in a corner, he passes it by as quickly as a squirrel, i.e. he does not clean it out.)

The parents of the boys are expected to feed the “devil”, so long as their sons are in the bush. They give rice to an old member who carries it over to the camp. The basin is brought back clean very quickly, having been wiped with raffia. The “devil” is supposed to have done this. Another trick, performed to show the “devil’s” mysterious power, is the building of his house, the *ngafawelei*. Some time in advance, the initiates erect a light structure of sticks and daub it over with mud. A canopy for a roof is made and thatch is cleverly tied to it. The walls are white-washed, and the house is ready. Then the “devil” goes down to the town and announces that as his own house has been burned he proposes to build a new one within an hour. At the appointed time, the “pre-fabricated” house is carried out to a conspicuous place and is planted over a pit, wherein the “devil” sits, playing on his pipe. Non-members are then invited to come out and see the house, and to wonder at this example of the “devil’s” skill.

(d) *The initiation rites*

The process of initiation is completed by means of three separate ceremonies, known respectively as *Ndehitie*, *Kpowa-mbei*, and *Kpia*. The opening rite is prefaced by a visit of the “devil” to the town. He is accompanied by both old and new members. They dance there and return to the bush where the ceremony is performed, and the first “warning” given to the boys. The contributions of food, which have been provided by the parents, are brought forward, i.e. rice, fowls, and one

bottle of palm-oil per head. A fowl is seized, its head placed on a large stone and severed by another stone. It is then thrown to the members. All the fowls are killed in a similar way. While the head is being severed, an official says: “*Sokoti*”, to which the expected reply is given. This is repeated over each fowl in turn, and the ceremony is a warning to the boys to expect the same kind of treatment, if they divulge any Poro secrets to a non-member. Everyone agrees to accept and abide by the warning. Food is then cooked and eaten, and when the feast is over the crowd returns to the temporary bush.

This marks the first stage in the boys’ initiation, and a similar rite is enacted about a week later. This is *Kpia-mbei*, the literal meaning of which is “non-members rice”. The people in the town cook rice, and this time the smaller boys collect it from outside the bush. The “devil” pays another visit to the town, and nets are spread over the house to catch him. He sounds his pipe to indicate his presence there, and immediately afterwards a second pipe is heard from the bush, suggesting that he has flown away. His interpreter leaves quietly in the crowd. The Poro gathering then returns to the sacred bush, and the ceremony proceeds.

The completion, or “pulling” of the Poro (*Kpia*) is prefaced by a rite known as *Ngafa goku lewe lei* (hitting the “devil’s” belly). The “devil” is said to be reluctant to deliver the boys he has eaten and to whom he is expected to give birth, one by one. Force has therefore to be used upon him, and members strike him in the belly. The day before this happens is a busy one. Further contributions of food are collected. Everything used by the boys during their novitiate must be destroyed, so as not to be seen by the women. Their clothes and rags are packed into a large hamper, which will represent the “devil’s” belly. As night approaches, old members flock in from all sides, and at about 9 p.m., a large dance is staged in the town. At first, only the Poro “devil” and the men take part, but after a while, the “devil” goes to rest in his house and women freely join in the dance, which goes on until day break.

For the initiates, however, this is a night of fear. They have been warned to keep awake lest they dream of the "devil". This would cause them to die in their sleep, and the idea is impressed upon them throughout the day. Their parents send them kola nuts to sustain them, and a large quantity of rice is eaten in order to ward off sleep. Then, at about 4 a.m., the *ngafa gohu lewe lei* begins. Like a woman in labour the "devil" groans and sighs mournfully. His interpreter explains that the "devil" is giving birth. The women clap their hands, and the men reproach him for detaining their children so long. They threaten to beat him out of the town, unless he delivers them immediately and pretend to be angry with him. Then, the hamper is dragged about while others belabour it with clubs. At each blow given to it, the "devil" moans and leans against various objects, such as banana and paw-paw trees. Anything he rests against, the men pull down with large wooden hooks. Roads are blocked with the branches of trees and a good deal of damage may be done to plantations around the town.

At dawn, however, the "devil" takes a road out of the town and stops playing. He is said to have flown off into the depth of the forest to feed on the giant crabs of the forest lakes, and will be away for a year. Before going, he asks for a new name to be given to him. Sometimes nets are spread around the bush the next morning to show the way he has climbed away into the sky.

As soon as the "devil" has gone, the boys are hurried into the *kameihun* and everything appertaining to the temporary camp, including its huts, is burned on the spot. This means that the "pulling" of the Poro—the happiest and long awaited day in the life of the initiates—has begun in earnest. Each boy is now told the final secrets that he has to learn about the society, and he takes his final vow of secrecy. The boys are lined up at the stones in the *palihun* in a semi-circle, round the *Sowa* and the *Mabole*. Moss and thread are wound round their toes, so that they are all tied together in a continuous chain. On their heads they wear caps of moss and leaves of the umbrella tree.

The *Mabole* stands in the middle, facing the sacred stones. She invokes the spirits of the society on their behalf, and prays that each new member may be as strongly attached to the society as the thread and moss which now bind them together. She asks that they may be productive of many children when they have wives. Prayers to the ancestral spirits on this occasion are addressed to former leaders of the society not, of course, to the ancestors of the individual offering them. The method of communication, however, is the same as the general one, i.e. the ancestors are called in order of seniority, beginning with the oldest and finishing with the one who has died most recently. The prayers conclude with a general supplication. Thus: "Father *Siaffa*, let it reach you; let it reach to *Kanga*: let it reach (lit. 'be laid down') to the head, the great one (i.e. God). This is what *Leve* (an old name for God) brought down (showed us to do) long ago. These children, whom we are 'pulling from the Poro to-day, let nothing harm them; let them not fall from palm trees; make their bodies strong; give them wisdom to look after their children; let them hold themselves in a good way; let them show themselves to be men!'"

As the *Mabole* speaks, she dips a white fowl into a medicine, composed of leaves and water, and sprinkles the boys with it. Each boy holds out his tongue, in turn, and the *Mabole* places some grains of rice on it in order to test his future. Holding up the fowl, she says: "If this boy has ill-fortune before him, do not pick the rice: but if the future is good for him, pick the grains". (N.B. The fowl used has been starved of food since the previous evening.)

The chicken is then killed, as in the previous ceremonies, by severing its neck with a stone, and the boys are sprinkled with its blood. At the order to rise, they jump up joyfully, and cut away and throw behind them the moss and thread which bound them. They are now full members of the society; but their heads must be shaved bare of boyish hair. While this is being done, the *Mabole* prepares the ceremonial meal. When it is ready, the *Sowa* rolls the rice, chicken flesh, and palm-oil prepared into lumps, placing

each piece on the *Mabole's* foot. Then, one by one the initiates bend down with their hands behind their backs to take the food. She raises her foot three times to the boy's mouth, saying: "*Sokoti*", to which he replies: "*Numo*". At the fourth time, he picks up the lump of food with his mouth and while he chews it the ceremony of swearing him in takes place. He is told that he will be choked by the rice, if he reveals any society secrets.

When this is over, the initiates are given a general ablution with the remaining medicine before being taken to a stream for bathing. Each boy is seized in turn, one man holding his feet and another his neck, and he is lowered into the water. A fowl is demanded from the boy's father and he is kept there until it arrives. This is repeated four times and then the boy is given his new set of clothes. The boys dress in these and wear a head tie over their shaven heads. The latter signifies that their heads have been broken by the "devil" and are in process of healing. A further aspect of their re-birth is the new name they acquire. Their actual birth names are dropped all together, and it is a great insult ever to use them. They have great pride in their Poro names because it marks the entrance into manhood, and sometimes signifies a special quality displayed in the bush.

(e) "*Pulling*" of the Poro school

When everyone is ready, the boys then march in procession to the town under a large country cloth. Their bodies have been smeared with burned

palm-oil to give them a particularly fresh appearance. Parents, kinsfolk, and well-wishers come out to meet them, and the boys are led to the town *barri*,¹ which has been specially prepared to lodge them. Gifts are brought out to them, and they remain there for four days, feasting heartily. Before they are finally discharged on the fourth day, as many pots of palm-wine as there are boys are taken into the *kameihun* for the farewell. The wine is supposed to be exclusively for the *Sowa* and the *Mabole*, but thirsty elders also flock in for refreshment. As the *Mabole* takes up a pot of wine, the initiate, who has contributed it, comes forward and kneels, facing the stones. The *Mabole* prays for him, a small libation is poured onto the ground, and the *Sowa* pulls off the head tie. The initiation of the new member is now entirely complete, and when all have been finally dealt with in this way, the Poro session itself is declared over.

In former times, should any of the boys die during the session, it was the custom to bury them secretly in the bush, and the parents were not informed officially until the session was over. Then one of the Poro elders would go round to the mother's house and break a pot in front of her, saying: "Of the pots you asked us to build, we are sorry to say that your's was broken". There would be no crying for the lad—the usual mourning custom—"because the mourners might breathe in some kind of disease". Nowadays, any such deaths are reported and fully investigated.

PART III

PRESENT SOCIOLOGICAL POSITION OF THE PORO

The cultural significance of the Poro is still very great among the Mende and other peoples of Sierra Leone. Not unnaturally, this is more the case in areas away from the railway and motor roads than in "urbanized" districts.

¹ A *barri* (the Mende term for which is *seme*) is a meeting and resting place, usually with open sides and a palm-thatch roof. It is usually the focal point in any large town.

In order to avoid friction with Creole people from the Colony, and other "non-believers", who would not be disposed to keep out of its way, the "devil" is never called to a number of the larger towns on the railway line. Despite this, the society is the main champion of the traditional ways of life, and is the only institution which offers active resistance to new habits and customs.

One indication of this is the fact that boys entering the bush are forbidden to take anything European in the way of clothes and equipment with them.

The resilience of the institution is also shown by the way it has survived opposition from outside, partly by Government ordinance. As early as 1897, the Poro Ordinance forbade the placing of Poro signs on trees. It was claimed that the chiefs were using the society's emblem as a means of holding up trading, sometimes in their personal interests, or in the case of a dispute with their people. Nowadays, the sign is used quite often for more positive purposes, for example to regulate farming practices and to ensure that sufficient time is given to the various operations of making a rice-farm rather than in collecting palm fruit. Orthodox Islam is against the Poro to the extent of forbidding Moslems to become members of it, or of any other secret society. But the prohibition is regarded very rarely except, perhaps, by immigrant people, such as the Mandingo, who are already well "Islamicized". Disapproval on the part of the Christian missions is less strong than it used to be, partly because the social function of the Poro is better known and appreciated than formerly. The missions generally have no prohibition on their members and teachers belonging to the society but expect them to discountenance, and not to take part in, any of its rituals. Neither Christianity nor Islam appears to have had much direct effect on the Poro's status. Indirectly, however, the acquisition of European ideas in mission schools has led, not only to disbelief in its sanctions, but to a more fundamental weakening of its prestige on the more general grounds on which all native institutions have suffered by comparison with western ones.

Not surprisingly, the real strength of the Poro lies in the attitude of its older members, and in the "big men" of native society, in general. Most of the latter are illiterate and their interests are vested deeply in the older order and in maintaining traditional controls over it. They are well aware of the institutional basis of their position

and are on continuous watch over it. In consequence, Poro secrets are still guarded very jealously: discussion of Poro matters, even when superficial, with a non-member, and particularly a European, is regarded as a serious offence on the part of an illiterate man, and as an act of disloyalty on the part of any one who is literate. Moreover, membership of the society is still a *sine qua non* for any one who wishes to advance in native society, or to exercise any influence there. This applies particularly, of course, to the political field. Important questions affecting land, and any serious palaver in the chiefdom, are talked over in the Poro bush, whether or not they come up for public notice and attention. The election of a new chief is also deliberated there, and sometimes is actually decided by swearing members of the electoral body, the Tribal Authority, on Poro medicine.¹

This combination of secrecy and exclusiveness, implicit in the ritual and the position of senior members, is an effective instrument of power which action outside, on the part of the Government, has only a partial means of regulating and of bringing into line with modern changes in administration.²

It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of abuses have crept into the system. Sometimes, the chief, acting in association with the Poro officials, calls a general, chiefdom Poro. Every town and village is required to send its quota of initiates, and fines are levied in respect of the numbers by which they are short. One chief levied tax on every non-member who travelled through his chiefdom, or rather, made him join and pay initiation fees. The fees themselves may be as high as £2 or £3, in the case even of small boys. On occasion, almost as much money as is realized in House Tax may be raised by such means. For example, in one chiefdom whose Tax normally amounts to some £700 per annum, some £400 appears to have been raised by means of a chiefdom Poro. If any complaints are made to the Administrative Officer, the reply is that

in the case of one chiefdom where a number of ritual murders took place. The chiefdom clerk there attends the initiation of Poro candidates, notes their names, and checks them off when they are "pulled" from the bush.

¹ The official election is carried out under the supervision of an Administrative Officer.

² An example of the indirect effect of Government regulation of native practices in this respect is shown

the persons responsible are simply following native custom. In any case, the individual making the complaint would run considerable danger of reprisals in a more or less indirect form.

This stress on the financial side has led several Poro members themselves to assert that, nowadays, the Poro is merely a "money making concern". Indeed, it is obvious that very often the extent to which training is provided is very limited. Compromise with the new conditions has meant that school boys are initiated after only a few nights in the bush and payment of fees. In other cases, several weeks may be spent in the bush. It is symptomatic of the depth of the cultural roots of the society that, somewhat unlike the women leaders of the Bundu,¹ the Poro elders are hostile to compromises in a more positive direction, in terms of modernizing their "school".

Ostensibly, their objection is that European ideas and methods, for example, in using the Poro session as a means of imparting up-to-date agricultural information and instruction, are quite incompatible with the Poro function, which is to be regarded as symbolical rather than utilitarian.²

The very fact that the initiation school has become largely a formal rite is indicative of the psychological ground that the Poro has lost. Membership of the society is still capable of imparting a feeling of solidarity and security, and of participation in a national institution. But, to a growing extent, it is the latter emotion, rather than any particular sense of awe, which is responsible for its widespread survival among the Mende, as well as other peoples, in the Protectorate of Sierra Leone.

¹ In the case of the Bundy or Sande society, the Government has carried out some experimentation with initiation schools as a medium for modern methods in hygiene, etc., which the girls are expected to pass on, when they return home.

² There is opposition of a different kind from many of the literate members of the society. Among this group, there is a feeling that any resources available for educational purposes would be employed better in starting fresh Government schools rather than in sponsoring "bush" ones.

TRANSITION RITES OF THE KUANYAMA AMBO

(A Preliminary Study)

PART I

EDWIN M. LOEB

(Editorial footnotes have been added at Dr. Loeb's request. M. JEFFREYS. Ast. Ed.)

INTRODUCTION

THE Kuanyama¹ are the most numerous of the Ambo tribes (see Map, p. 00), numbering at present over 60,000. A large portion formerly lived in South Angola, but for the most part moved down into South West Africa (Ovamboland) at the beginning of the first World War. The two most important tribes in Ovamboland are the Ondonga and the Kuanyama. The Ondonga have been described by C. Hahn; the Kuanyama, by Tönjes and others (see Bibliography). The geography of the country has been dealt with by Nitsche.

This preliminary survey of Kuanyama transition rites, should shed additional light on the nature of Bantu society. Richards² has pointed out a contrast within the Bantu between pastoral, hunting, and agricultural activities, and has shown that pastoral activities were a matter of status,³ while agriculture among the South East provided the main food supply. Hambly,⁴ who has treated Africa in a cultural historical manner, also arrived at the conclusion that the Ovimbundu were divided into three strata, *an archaic hunting culture, a Negro agricultural culture, and a Hamitic cattle-raising culture.*

The Kuanyama exhibit a similar stratification which has not only affected their transition rites, but also the rites in themselves have affected the three layers of culture. The transition rites arose most likely in the lowest layer of culture. Furthermore, the male, patrilineal cattle stratum is both later than the female matrilineal hoe-culture stratum, and also, among the Ambo, is in conflict with it. This conflict in turn, increases friction between the sexes, which is alleviated by being brought into dramatic presentation in the girls' puberty rite. This conflict also may be found in the songs, courtship, and marriage customs of the people.

To understand better the factors influencing the social organization in a cultural stratification superimposed upon rites of transition, every feature of the physical and social environment of the Kuanyama should be described. Here, the main features will be topically treated under the following headings:

1. The Physical Environment
2. The Material Environment
3. The Political and Social Organization
4. The Religion
5. The Rites of Transition.

I. THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The climate of Ovamboland allows little variation in the ritual and economic life of its people. Thus, the plow has proved a failure due to the necessity of transplanting grain by hand and of planting in hillocks above the yearly floods. This

failure has handicapped the missionaries in introducing monogamy because agriculture still requires many wives to hoe a large plot of ground.

The land stands at about 3,300 feet elevation. It is very flat, sloping gently from the north,

¹ The spelling used in this paper for native terms is that adopted by the Natives from the German missionaries. "S" is pronounced "sh"; "u" indicates "w" before "e" or "i", and elsewhere it is pronounced "u" as in "Bantu"; "j" or "y" are pronounced "y" as in

"yes"; aspirated "m" and "n" should be written "m̃" and "ñ" (although no longer indicated in official script and the schools pronounce the letters as "m" and "n")

² RICHARDS (1932), p. 32. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴ HAMBLY (1934), p. 331.

and has little erosion in the rainy season. It is covered by a layer of sand under which is rich dark humus. Minerals are absent, except for iron ore in the Angola section, and stones are scarce leaving the people without stone tools.¹

Precipitation is uncertain in amount and timing. The average rainfall is 17 inches, with a short rainy season in October and November, and a long rainy season from December to April. In good years five times as much rain may fall as in famine years. Intensive agriculture is made possible by the periodic flooding of the Kunene, the Kuvalety (dry river bed), and the Okavango Rivers. The Kuanyama country receives the greatest benefit from these floods, except that malarial epidemics coincide with years of ample rainfall.

November is the warmest month with temperature rising above 100° F.; while June is the coldest, although 70° F. is experienced at mid-day. Frosts are unknown, yet the natives build fires in their huts during winter nights and the pagan women protect their skins against dryness and temperature extremes by greasing themselves with fat and red ochre. Water is used on rare occasions, and then only as a purification rite.

The country is intersected by broad, shallow water-courses known as *marumbas*. The Kuanyama territory is covered by thick sub-tropical vegetation, while that of the Ondonga and territories to the west are covered by open grass plains fringed with bush. The treeless condition of the south is due partly to the saline soil, and partly to deforestation caused by the earlier population of his area than in the Kuanyama area. In 1850 elephants were hunted in the woods of Ondonga.

II. THE MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT

The Ambo live in scattered kraals built on the raised ground between *marumbas*. Before roads were built the *marumbas* served as paths for native

travellers. The gardens surrounding a kraal are also on raised ground, but to avoid flooding must be further raised by being cultivated in mounds. Sometimes wells and storage reservoirs are built within a kraal, and the grass of a kraal may be used as cattle-feed in the dry season. The structure and organization of the average Ovambo kraal can best be explained by studying the cartograph appearing with part II. All kraals usually have four divisions (first wife's, second wife's, other wife's, and kraal head's quarters) surrounding a central meeting place (*olupale*). The women, being the food-providers, occupy three quarters of the kraal; the boys, being the guards and herdsmen occupy the outskirts of the kraal. The regimen and ritual connected with kraal life has been a significant facet in preserving the native cultures of the Ambo.

The hoe-culture complex belongs to the women; the men only cutting down the trees in the fields and building thorn bush hedges to keep off the cattle. In Ondonga, the women carry fertilizer to the fields, but this is taboo in Kuanyama, and instead the kraals are moved every three years so that what was a cattle kraal becomes a new field. The king's kraal was never moved, although its interior was changed.

Planting begins in October or November. To prevent bushy overgrowth, the women weed and transplant as the rain increases. The chief crops of the Ambo are Kaffir corn and millet. Vigna bean is planted, and peanuts have been introduced from Angola. The former native commissioner, Major C. Hahn, first introduced rice growing. Gourds and melons are native crops. Cotton grows wild and was formerly used to safeguard the arrow-points in old-fashioned quivers. Poor quality native tobacco is grown in Kuanyama, but not mentioned in earlier accounts. At that time beads were used in trade and tobacco, being scarce, was used as snuff. Dagga was not smoked, but used in trade with the Bushmen.

The harvest ceremonies come in June or July.

¹ One large stone in Ondonga was known as sacred (SCHINZ, 1891, p. 330). The seats of wooden tree trunks forming the semi-circular council places in the

kraal may have been derived from a megalithic culture. The king's stool or throne was always higher than the others.

The women reap the corn by hand, stomp it and place it in huge grain storage baskets. They cook porridge from the corn or millet and make beer from the grain—preferably, the Kaffir corn. Beer is consumed all the year around except in February and March when a more intoxicating drink for the men and (some of the women) is obtained from the *amarula* fruit of the *omuongo* tree (*Sclerocarya Schweinfuthiana* Schinz). Every-day the women bring food to the kraal head, his guests and servants, as well as feeding themselves and their small children at their own cooking places. Only at wedding ceremonies and harvest feasts may they eat with the men. In the king's kraal a male cook was employed for cooking the meat, and the king, having no equal, always ate alone.*

Besides cereal and a limited meat supply from cattle and the game hunted in the forests between tribal divisions, the Ambo obtain considerable supplies of fish at the close of the rainy season. The Kuanyama women make and use their own dip baskets (*osongo*), while the men make and use trap baskets (*omudiva*). These latter are placed in openings in dams, constructed for the purpose. Women also poison fish with the sap of the *omuhongo* tree, a species of Euphorbia. The dried branches of this tree also serve as torches for catching frogs at night.

The Ambo have access to iron, salt and copper. Iron is obtained once a year by the Kuanyama blacksmiths from Angola. The Kuanyama barter salt from the Ondonga, and use it in seasoning and preserving fish and meat. It is never used in porridge. Similarly the Ondonga formerly bartered copper from the Heikum Bushmen at Tsumeb and the Kaokoveld. It was then smelted, shingled, and traded to the Kuanyama and other Ambo.¹

It was used as wire to cover the sheaths of the beautiful knives of kings and noblemen.² It was also used in making heavy anklets (*ongodo*), worn by Kuanyama and Ondonga women of rank. These anklets were not only an ostensible display of wealth, but since they could not be removed except by a smith, they prevented the women from running away. In war such women were liable to have their legs cut off for the wealth they bore.

Cattle-raising is the men's business, including the milking and butter making. The cattle are housed in the kraals during the latter part of the wet season, and at the beginning of the dry season they are sent to the outposts (usually in Angola) under the charge of young boys. In April or May the cattle are brought home and the big cattle ceremony (*engobe*) is held. The cattle are presented to the kraal owners (both living and dead) amid much song, dancing, and feasting.

Besides cattle, the Ambo raise goats, which are the poor man's chief property, a few pigs, and an increasing number of chickens—although their eggs are not eaten. Only the wealthy own horses. Sheep thrive only towards the Kaokoveld. Every kraal has its native dogs which were formerly used by the nobles and kraal owners in hunting expeditions, and in robbing neighbours of their goats. All Ambo eat dogs, but the Kuanyama never ate them in the king's kraal.

Men do all woodwork, the making and moving of kraals, and the tanning of skins. They do all the trading. Women make baskets and pottery, and in Ondonga they manufacture the ostrich egg-shell beads. To-day, there is little for young the men to do, since cattle raids are outlawed, and the stores have done away with native trading.

* [Divine kings in Africa are supposed to be spirits and spirits do not eat. Hence as no one sees the king eat; the figment that he is a spirit is kept up. "The king of Benin is Fetiche, and the principal object of adoration in his dominions. He occupies a higher post here than the pope does in Catholic Europe; for he is not only God's vice-regent upon earth, but a god himself, whose subjects both obey and adore him as such. . . . King Bowarré . . . although he is supposed by his poor deluded subjects to have the attributes of a god (it being a very heinous crime for any of them to entertain an opinion that he, like other

mortals, requires either food or sleep) knew very well that white men . . . required both." ADAMS, J. *Remarks on the Country from Cape Palmas to the River Congo*. 112. London, 1823. See also, WILSON-HAFFENDEN, J. R. *The Kwotto of Toto* (Panda). J. R. Af. 8. April 1928. See also, SCHWEINFORTH, G. *The Heart of Africa*, II. 45. London, 1878. See also, BURTON, R. F. A. *Mission to the King of Dahome*. I. 245. London, 1864. STAYT, H. A. *The Bavenda*. 204. London, 1931. The Divine Umundri king is likewise a spirit and eats alone, unpublished MS. M. D. W. JEFFREYS. Asst. Ed.]

¹ Hahn (1867), p. 286. ² Shaw (1938), pp. 253-275.

Even native crafts are on the decline. Some men will aid their wives in the fields (under strong protest), while others will pick up minor crafts, such as mat making. The great majority of men, however, migrate south in search of work from Europeans.

III. POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Indirect Rule.—The Ambo, under the mandate of South West Africa, are administered by a system of indirect rule with officials advising and directing a group of headmen or a single chief. Half the tribes, including the Ondonga, have chiefs who have replaced kings. Kingship expired in Kuanyama in 1917 when king (*ohamba*) Mandume was shot by the Union forces. Now, the Kuanyama and the remaining tribes are ruled by headmen and sub-headmen.

Divine Monarchy.—All the Ambo, excepting a few small tribes on the Kunene, formerly had sacred kings. They were not absolute monarchs, however, even though they were divine and theoretically owners of all land, cattle, and subjects. In the first place, a king was bound by his people's customary law which was under the control of the ancestors and the taboos (*osidila*). Again, he was advised by a tribal council, and was liable to assassination if he acted contrary to their wishes. Finally, he obeyed his mother who occupied a position of great importance. His father, on the other hand, was of a different clan, and, even if he acted as regent while the king was under-age, he had by law to be put to death once the monarch took possession of the throne.*

The king was supported by leasing land-holdings to his nobles (*elenga*) who in turn leased the land to their followers; by levying fines; by "first-fruit" offerings of Kaffir corn and

amarula fruit; and by cattle-raids in foreign territory. In the first year of his reign, the king would lead a cattle-raid before entering the royal kraal (*ombala*). In subsequent raids headed by the nobility, the king would receive a royal share of the loot. The nobility (*omalenga*) of Ondonga were a caste of the royal clan. In Kuanyama men from other clans might attain temporary nobility through the favor of the ruler. Since cattle-raiding has been abolished the headmen still obtain their annual tributes, but fines go into a tribal fund. Grown men also are taxed five shillings a year for grain reserves.

The welfare of the land depended on the health of the king and the upkeep of a sacred fire. This sacred fire was first given by the High God, Kalunga, and was the source from which all other fires were obtained. The first wife of the king maintained the sacred fire in the royal kraal, while the first wife of the lesser kraal owner had the same duty. Since the welfare of the country depended on the health of the king, if he became sick or if it was thought that he might become sick, he was in imminent danger of strangulation by his heirs to the throne, that is, his younger brothers and sister's sons. Whichever one of these killed the king would become ruler in his stead.¹ Hence, the king's kraal was a labyrinth with many blind passages and pit-falls (Fig. I). In imitation, the lesser kraals were constructed in a similar manner. Potential successors to the throne were never allowed access to the king's private quarters. The royal victuals were always tasted by a professional taster, and if the king really became sick his close relatives were hurriedly escorted out of the country. The king had but one safeguard. If his blood were spilt then his ghost would be powerless in the afterworld to confer rain and other blessings upon his people. Therefore, none of the monarchs ran any danger of being shot. Instead, they might be either poisoned or strangled. As a precaution, however, they

*[Divine kings are of the order of Melchizedek "without father or mother". "The assertion that the new king has henceforward no father or mother is note-worthy, for its obvious meaning is that the king, having been reborn as a son of the gods, has no longer an earthly father or mother, and it was even stated that in former times the parents of a Jukun king were put to death

on the day of their son's election." MEEK, C. K., *A Sudanese Kingdom*. 137. London, 1931. See also JOHNSON, O., *History of the Yoruba*. 63. London, 1931. I found the same principle applied to the Divine Umundri king. Unpublished MS. M. D. W. JEFFREYS. Ast. Ed.]

¹ Cf. The King of Nemi (Golden Bough).

were not allowed to leave their countries.* Regicide could not have been very common. Schinz inquired into the causes of death of six Ondonga kings from 1830 to 1884. Of these, the cause of death of three was unknown; two died natural deaths (syphilis and delirium tremens); while one was murdered by his successor.¹

Matrilineal Clans.—All the Ambo have matrilineal clans. Pettinen has counted fifteen for the Ondonga.² For the Kuanyama, nineteen have been counted, thus far.³ Most of these clans (*epata*) are named after animals or plants,⁴ and in this sense they are totemic. But the people claim no descent from these animals or plants, nor are such objects sacred to the clans. In Ondonga the king and nobles always came from the hyena clan, and a former order of priesthood from the lion clan. Likewise, in Kuanyama the kings were all taken from the mourning clan, which is said in early days to have conquered the cattle clan. The people of the mourning clan still have a higher social standing than those of other clans. Frequently, a kingdom was split between two rulers who usually were brothers of the leading clan. This was true of Ondonga, Ombadja and Kuanyama during a greater part of the 19th century.

It would appear probable that the clans are further divided into matrilineal lineages. In fact, Pettinen states that the lineages are called *onzikua* in Ondonga.⁵ However, lineage names are not, as yet, known.

The clans are exogamic. None can become engaged to a near relative or member of his own clan. When clans become too big, daughter clans are formed into which one may marry. In the genealogies taken there have been no cases of marrying from the same clan.⁶ Even the kings had to obey the laws of exogamy and choose their wives from a plebian rather than from the royal clan. Hence, a king was never succeeded by his own son, but usually by a

younger brother or a sister's son. In the genealogy of one headman and his wives, one of the wives is the mother's brother's daughter of the headman. This form of marriage is not socially sanctioned by the Kuanyama. Among the Ukua-mbi, Ombalantu, and Ombandja, however, cross-cousins of opposite sex joke with one another as youths, calling each other "my bull" (*omedi jange*), and a man may marry either his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter that is, one of his cross-cousins. This is in accordance with the Herero kinship system⁷ where the kin terminology accords with a clan system and there is symmetrical cross-cousin marriage. Among the Kuanyama, however, the present kinship system is of the generation type, in which cousins call one another brothers and sisters, and therefore cousin marriage meets with opposition. A man also may not marry his wife's sister while his wife is living. He sometimes marries her after his wife's death. When a man dies a brother frequently helps out by marrying one of the wives. A man never marries a deceased father's wife.

*Patrilineal and Matrilineal Mergence.*⁸—None of the Ambo are entirely matrilineal. Rather, their social organization shows a compromise between the patrilineate and the matrilineate. Thus, a man takes his mother's clan, but is named after his father: "so and so, son of so and so". A woman also takes her mother's clan, but after she is married is called after her father's clan by the younger members of the family as a term of respect.

Property (which consists mostly of cattle) is always handed down in the female line. That is, a man must leave his possessions to his clan members, and chiefly to his brothers and his sisters' sons. During his life time, however, he may publically give away cattle or other possessions to his own sons. While land is public property and may not be inherited, the usufruct is meticulously divided between a man, his wives

* [This tabu is widespread among Divine kings in Africa and elsewhere. Thus the king of England is not supposed to vacate his realm nor the Pope to leave the Vatican city. M. JEFFREYS. Ast. Ed.]

¹ SCHINZ (1891), p. 321. ² PETTINEN (1926), p. 77.

³ LOEB (1948), Field notes. ⁴ ESTERMANN (1934), p. 440.

⁵ PETTINEN (1926), p. 77. ⁶ LOEB (1947), Field notes.

⁷ SCHINZ (1891), p. 177.

⁸ Marriage and residence after marriage are not entirely patrilocal. See under *Marriage*, "Transition Rites of the Kuanyama Ambo" in the next issue of *African Studies*.

and their children. Each corn granary is owned by a member of the family.

Polygyny.—Polygyny is normal for all the cattle-raising Bantu, and it is the usual status for the older pagan men among the Ambo. The balance of population admits of polygyny since, according to the 1946 census records¹ there were 50 per cent more women than men in Kuanyama,² and there was a similar oversupply of women among the other tribes of Amboland.³ In Ondonga, at the time of Schinz (1891), most men had two wives, many only one, and few more than two. Schinz stated then, (and this was in a period just prior to the time that the younger men started going south for work) that the number of wives must have exceeded the number of men.⁴ To-day, there are still extreme examples of polygyny. One Kuanyama headman has had thirty-six wives in all. He was divorced from twenty-two of these, and one he accidentally killed. In 1947 thirteen remained, and even though this case is a typical, it is generally known that marriage is unstable in Ovamboland.

Divorce.—The natives say that "men are masters over the women". Yet, a woman can leave her husband at any time and seek refuge with her mother, or better still, with her mother's brother. The mother's brother occupies the usual position of awe and respect found in most matrilineal societies, and is called *tatekulu*, or "grandfather". He is able to furnish the best protection for his run-a-way niece. The husband will follow her after a time, and try to persuade her to return, either by giving her presents, or even by "pushing her around a bit". However, the mother's relatives are always there to protect her.

In former days the wives of influential men actually were under absolute control of their husbands. For real or imaginary offences they

could be killed and thrown into the bush. If the headwife incurred any displeasure, she was sometimes buried alive besides her hut. Lesser men frequently beat their wives, but seldom discarded them.

There was an important exception to these laws of patrilocal marriage and polygyny, and that was the case of women of the royal family, as a king's sister. Such a woman chose her own husband and made him come to live in her kraal. Fidelity on his part was a matter of life and death.

The ownership of children among the Kuanyama shows again a compromise between the matrilineate and the patrilineate. While immature children belong to the mother, yet a girl when the parents are separated always returns to her father the year before her *efundula* (girl's puberty) ceremony. However, (as Schinz has stated for Ondonga⁵) so completely do the children belong to the mother, that in case one of them dies while living with the father, the latter must pay a fine to the mother.* Therefore, the father carefully watches over the lives of his offspring. If a wife has not given birth to children, and has been married less than three years, and leaves her husband, she must return to her husband all the presents he has given her, including the marriage price. The husband in turn, must return all presents received from the parents of his wife, even if the wife has committed adultery.

IV. THE RELIGION

Three Worlds. — Early investigators show that the Kuanyama believed in three worlds. "The first is above us and it is pleasant to live there, for droughts and hunger are unknown. It rains quite frequently and sowing and harvest is unceasing. It is there that Kalunga, the highest divine being, dwells. The nobles of the land gather around

¹ Reports (1946), p. 3.

² The Kuanyama appear to bear the greatest increase in population due to their favourable land conditions and their good government. In 1938 it was estimated for the Kuanyama that the births totaled 52.8 per thousand, and deaths 25.8 per thousand.

³ Reports (1938), par. 575.

⁴ SCHINZ (1891), p. 311. ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

* [Among the Akamba, where the patrilineal and matrilineal mores are in process of adjustment, one finds that "the man who is unfortunate enough to kill his own child, pays fines to the mother and his nearest relations, since through his act he is considered to have injured the whole family". LINDBLOM, G. *The Akamba*. 155. Uppsala, 1920. M. JEFFREYS. Ast. Ed.]

him.* A man of the people has little prospect of reaching this upper world. The second world is that on which we live. It receives from above just a little of the surplus rain, only that which has oozed through and fallen on the ground. The worst world is the third, which is to be found under the earth. It is only the surplus rainfall of this earth which percolates through to the lower world. The departed souls of the common people are to be found there. They live in poverty and suffer hunger."¹ It is due to the suffering of the people in the lower world that many come back to earth and haunt the living.

A High God.—While most primitive high gods are otiose, or non-active, in nature, this is not true of Kalunga. Schinz writes: "Kalunga stands high in power over the ancestral gods. The concept of the highest god among the Ovambo is more concrete, immanent, and has nothing in common with the transcendental idea of the Herero (concerning their high god Karunga)."² According to Brinker, Kalunga has a mighty girdle around his loins on which hang two baskets. In them Kalunga keeps good and evil.³ Kalunga wanders over the land and distributes food and blessings to the good, sickness and famine to the evil. It was also Kalunga who gave the Ovambo kings their sacred fires. So long as these fires burned, the people were safe in their kraals and the cattle in their fields.

With the advent of the Europeans, the pagan concept of Kalunga has steadily faded, and instead has been identified with the Christian God. It is certain that Kalunga was not initially a borrowing from the missionaries. Hugo Hahn, the grandfather of the present Major C. Hahn, was the first missionary to visit Ovamboland. Both he and the then ruling king of the Kuanyama, Tjipandeka, were called Kalunga.⁴ Moreover, Schinz reports that among the northern Ambo or Ehanda, Kalunga was given a share of grain

at the harvest ceremony. While in Kuanyama a black ox sacrifice was made to a deceased king in time of drought; in Ondonga, in former times, this sacrifice was sometimes made to Kalunga.⁵ Still, the importance of Kalunga should not be over-estimated, as Pettinen probably did in attributing all of the Ondonga prayers to Kalunga, and none to the *ovakuamuñgu*, the ancestors.⁶ This is contrary to present investigation.⁷

Religious Cults.—Besides the sky cult of Kalunga the Kuanyama also prayed and sacrificed to water, the evening star, the sun, and the moon.⁸ Texts on the sun cult⁹ are as follows: "An old man (the kraal owner) would say to the children of his kraal: 'You must go and collect your fellow children, both boys and girls, so that you may come and inaugurate my ceremony (*oi juuo*)'. So, the children did as they were told by the old man. Then, they constructed a very large imitation kraal out of corn stalks, and placed some tree trunk stools inside. In this kraal they also made quarters for the first wives and second wives. Two children then were selected, a boy and a girl, at least ten to twelve years of age, to be the special children for the ceremony. These children went out naked early in the morning to praise the sunrise, and resumed their clothing on returning, whereupon everyone had breakfast. Then, the people went off to their day's work."

The moon cult has been described by Schinz. "In a number of (Ambo) tribes there is a moon cult, for in the first moon night after the new moon, young and old smear their faces and breasts with a white clay of Kaolin earth obtained from the Kuanyama. They dance and send out wishes to the increasing moon in the hopes that they will be heard.—This white earth is worshipped everywhere in the land as sacred, and is sent to the Kunene and Okavango rivers."¹⁰ The courtship dance called *Uaitana* also takes place at full moon.

* [Among the Umundri Ibo of the Niger, much the same belief is held. A halo round the sun is regarded as Chuku holding council with his nobility. Unpublished MS. M. JEFFREYS. Ast. Ed.]

¹ VEDDER (1938), pp. 74-5. ² SCHINZ (1891), p. 318.

³ BRINKER, (1900), p. 38. ⁴ HAHN (1867), p. 290. ⁵ SCHINZ (1891), p. 181. ⁶ PETTINEN (1924-25), pp. 161-79.

⁷ LOEB (1947-48), Field notes. ⁸ WARNECK (1910) p. 316. ⁹ IFLUND, B. (1947), Collected text. ¹⁰ SCHINZ (1891), p. 318.

Annual Religious Ceremonies.—The Kuanyama formerly had four annual religious ceremonies. These were: (1) the *Epena*, or spring festival; (2) the *Omuaji*, or New Year's ceremony, which was held at the time that the *amurula* fruit ripened; (3) the *Engobe tadidana*, the cattle feast; and (4) the *Osipepa*, or harvest ceremony. The cattle feast is still a big annual event among the Kuanyama. The other three ceremonies are no longer held. They were connected with the king's control over agricultural procedure, and served to keep the tribe consolidated.

V. THE RITES OF TRANSITION

Of Pre-Agricultural Origin.—It seems logical that transition rites may have had their origin among pre-agricultural people. They are found among all people of the earth and symbolize the passage of a male or female from one age status to another, as with the assumption of the *toga* by the Roman youth. However, among primitive black-skinned people and the less-civilized American Indians, as well as the natives of West Ceram, these puberty rites take such similar forms that they must belong to a very early stratum of human culture. With girls the ceremony usually consists of isolation and taboos at the time of first menstruation. With boys the ritual is more complicated. There are four main parts to boys' ceremonies: First, the boy is given a "tribal mark", such as circumcision or tooth evulsion. Secondly, spirits are sounded or voiced by either swinging a bull-roarer (a board on a piece of cord) or blowing horns. The instrument used is always very taboo to women and the uninitiated. Thirdly, a death and resurrection ceremony where the candidates die as boys and come to life as men.

And lastly, the appearance of spirits before the boys, or the boys themselves are regarded as spirits.¹

The above rituals enter, at least in part, into all significant Kuanyama transition ceremonies. Moreover, among the Ambo, the girls must undergo a test of endurance. There is no mention of the high god Kulunga or the ancestral spirits. Therefore, the transition rites must be situated in a lower level of Ambo culture.

Sex Antagonism.—Sex antagonism in Amboland is heightened by the fact that men are the protagonists of cattle culture and women of agriculture. Both in the ritual of courtship and that of the girls' puberty ceremony (*efundula*) there lies a large amount of rivalry between the sexes, even to the point of mock hostility. Most love songs are not love songs in our sense of the word, but song of pretended disdain.

Pregnancy and Child Birth.—The precautions taken against a woman having illegitimate children can be given no rational reason by the patriarchal cattle-raising males. It is rather because of the people's fear of any abnormal child, whether a bastard or a cripple. A bastard is especially feared because it is considered impure, and it is thought that when it grows up the remainder of the family will die and the bastard will inherit all the property. Such a child is called *omona ue ehengu*, "the child of an *ehengu*". *Ehengu* is a whispered word in polite society and signifies a woman having a child before going through the *efundula* ceremony.* Promiscuous women are rare, and are called "dogs" (*ombua*).†

In the days of the kings it was believed that a bastard allowed to live would contaminate the

¹ LOEB (1929), pp. 249-88.

* [Among the Ibibio of Southern Nigeria, a girl who has a child before she is married carries a similar term. "An *uwok* is a woman who has none of the body cicatrization, she had not been through the fattening process: she has not made her debut as a naked bride and been handed over publicly as a wife to carried off on her husband's shoulders. She has not been through the marriage ceremony. She has committed the unpardonable sin. She has had an infant before her age-grade has gone through the fattening stage and its subsequent ceremonies." Unpublished MS. M. JEFFREYS.]

† [It is curious to note that harlots are called "dogs". The hierodule or temple prostitutes of ancient days around the eastern Mediterranean were also called dogs. "The name of dog is sometimes put . . . for one who prostitutes himself. . . by sodomy: in this manner several understand the injunction given to Moses by not offering in the tabernacle of the Lord the hire of a whore or the price of a dog. Deut. 23: 18. And Christ excludes dogs, sorcerers, whore-mongers, murders and idolaters from the kingdom of Heaven. Rev. 22: 15." *Crudens Concordance*, 141. London. M. JEFFREYS. Ast. Ed.]

land. If the king or his nobles discovered that a girl was pregnant before her *efundula*, she was killed and her body was thrown into the bushes. Usually such a woman either had an abortion, or fled to a different tribe where she had her child and then killed it.

According to native accounts, the last king of the Kuanyama, Mandume, passed a number of reform laws in 1913, the first year of his reign. Among these was a law prohibiting abortion. If a girl became pregnant, two head of cattle had to be paid. The guilty man had to pay one to the girl and another to the family of the girl. The latter animal was killed at once, after which the entire immediate family of the girl stood on top of its intestines saying: "*jepeni*", which means, "you were not killed although you are pregnant, and you are not being thrown out in the fields to be eaten by the wild beasts". This second ox was said to restore the connection between the girl and the remainder of her family.

A present, a man pays two oxen to the tribal fund if he makes a girl pregnant and then marries her, and four oxen (two to the tribal fund and two to the girl's family) if he refuses marriage. It usually is the father or mother's brother of the young man who is able to pay this fine. If the girl refuses marriage, her family must pay two oxen to the tribal fund; but this has not yet happened.

Husbands try to make their wives pregnant before they leave for work in the south, because then they know that the women will be faithful for the nine months of pregnancy and nine months after child birth, that is, until the child is able to crawl. It is believed that if a pregnant woman slept with a man other than her husband, she would die at childbirth or shortly afterwards. A man and his wife continue sleeping together until the woman is ready for the delivery of her child.

Men have no taboos (*oidila*) while their wives are pregnant. Under a system of polygyny this would place the men under constant restrictions. However, they continue all their customary work while pregnant, even their heaviest work such

as hoeing and grain stamping. A pregnant woman will not eat pig (*osingulu*) for fear that her child may resemble a pig; duck (*odila*) might cause her child to have webbed feet; the flesh of hedgehog (*nikifa*) might make the child shy; if the mother ate a small tortoise called *osima*, the child might retreat into the womb after its birth, as a turtle retreats into its shell. Likewise, a variety of deer (the duiker, *Sylvicapra grimmia* L.) called *ombabi* is taboo for the woman. Even after the child is born neither mother or child is allowed to eat the flesh of this animal until the child is able to pronounce the deer's name, *ombabi*. If the father kills this animal, both parents try to coax the child to pronounce the word *ombabi*.

A woman, as a rule, gives birth to her child in a kraal other than her husband's, usually her father's, and an experienced woman helps her. In case of emergency, as when the afterbirth fails to come out, a medicine-man (*ondudu*) is summoned to give herbs. If the child is slow in appearing, the *ondudu* gives both herbs and massages. The umbilical cord is cut next to the navel with an iron blade (*osimbi*). The afterbirth (*ese*) is buried near the woman's hut.

If the child is crippled, or born with breach presentation, it is considered unlucky, and formerly was killed. Such unusual events were thought to be caused by the displeasure of Kalunga.¹ Twins born to the king were likewise killed for the same reason. But if an ordinary man had twins, they were spared after the appropriate ceremony (*epara*), which is still carried out. This entails publically bathing the parents and the twins in water, and giving the twins "Big Names" such as the names of kings.

If an *okalume* (boy) is born, the father kills an ox, and his friends congratulate him on his young *okauta* (little bow). If, on the other hand, a little girl is born, she from birth on is an *okatemo* (a little hoe), and there is no feast. At the most, a chicken is killed, and the helping women are given porridge and the poorer sort of beer made from millet. In four days time, when the relatives come to see the mother of

¹ BRINKER (1900), p. 40.

a new-born child, they bring food, dance and sing :

"*Osike setueta oludalo.*"
 "What we come for is birth."

A skin is placed on the ground of the mother's hut for the child to lie on, and it is rubbed with red ochre and fat. If the child is a boy, the father actually makes a little bow (*ota*) which is placed in the mother's hut; if a girl, a small basket (*okambale*) is made for her by the women.

After four days, if the child is healthy, the father is sent for to name the child. If he is away, a messenger is sent to bring back a name. Meanwhile, all relatives and especially the elderly female relatives give the baby temporary nicknames. The father first gives the hyena call (twice for good luck), and then pronounces the child's real name. In the olden days this name was kept secret from strangers for fear of witchcraft. The name of the child may be taken from a prominent member of the family of the same sex, or it may bear reference to some peculiarity of the child, or to some peculiarity attending the child's birth, as, being born at night. Male and female names can be distinguished by the natives, and a male homosexual (*esenge*) will change his male to a female name.

In eight days the mother is ready to leave her hut, but first she has to be purified by the *osilombe* ceremony. Large lumps of Kaffir corn porridge (*omanghako*) are made and presented to her by her father's sister or by her mother. The woman eats these while her sponsor prays :

"*Oi! Uaninga vali oufimba*
"Oi! Become again pregnant
uadala vali."
 give birth again."

The mother is then cleaned with cornmeal, either in her doorway, or in her hut. She leaves the hut and goes to work with her child wrapped in a hide on her back. After this, she only leaves the child when it is asleep and she is going a short distance. Often the child is taken care of by an older sister. Children are fed from the breast for two or three years.

The First Year.—When the child is a year old the *ekululo* ceremony takes place. The child's head is shaved and its body rubbed with fat and red ochre. At the same time the child receives its first decoration of beads and small rings of beads for its waist. If it is a girl, she wears a squirrel skin (*ehalumi*) in front and a small ox skin (*okonguuo*) at the back.

Twelve Years Old.—At about the age of twelve, the *ekulo* ceremony takes place for boys and girls. As among the Herero, the two central lower incisors are knocked out with an iron chisel (*ondjao*). Christians no longer have tooth mutilation, but in the olden days it was believed that if these teeth were not taken out, the child would bring death to his relatives. Later, when the wound has healed, the chisel is again taken and the act of *ehongo* is performed. Also in the manner of the Herero, small bits are cut from the two upper central incisors. Many old Ambo still have these marks. The Kuanyama never tattoo; although the Ondonga are similar to the Herero in this respect, since facial tattoo is common among them.

After tooth mutilation boys are considered youths, and are entitled to wear the clothing of youths. The clothing of children, unmarried people, and married women is illustrated in Figs. 2 to 7. A youth's clothing formerly consisted of a wedge-shaped apron made from a tanned cattle stomach (*eteta*) held up by a broad belt of hard leather (*kuamo*) wound several times around the body. Among poor people a simple strap was worn. To-day, the *eteta* is usually a lapi cloth. An article of clothing which is seldom seen worn to-day is the leather horn (*esongi*) (Fig. 5). It extends upright from the buttocks in the form of a tail, and according to Nitsche¹ it formerly had a pocket or sack-shaped skin (*onghutura*) in which grease was deposited in order to keep the limbs supple during long trading expeditions. The girdle was also used as a pocket, and in it the Kuanyama kept his pipe, tobacco, dagger, and knobkerrie.

The chief article of clothing of a girl is a girdle of bands of white ostrich egg-shell beads shirred

¹ Nitsche (1913), p. 121.

together either into even scallops or uneven drapes at the front, back, and sides (Fig. 2). Every girl's ambition is to have her girdle reach to her knees by the time she is ready for the girl's (*efundula*) puberty ceremony. Married women wear shorter girdles of colored beads which are a sign of even greater wealth. Black beads are worn only in mourning. The skirts of women are usually in three parts: An apron worn at the back (*onguuu*) either of the skin of a black animal or of cotton material; a front apron (*eteta*) of tripe or cloth; a back panel (*omudjalelo*) of leather (Fig. 6 and 7). Aprons of animal skins are used chiefly on ceremonial occasions.¹

Boy's Circumcision Ceremony.—The only writers who describe the Ambo circumcision rites are Brinker², Krafft³, and Hahn.⁴ The first two authors described the Kuanyama ritual; the latter, the Ondonga. It appears probable that the rites included the use of the bull-roarer among the Osikuanyama tribes of the east, but not among the Ondonga-speaking tribes of the west. Hahn⁵ does not report it used in initiation rites, but he does report its use in rain-making ritual.

Circumcision has not taken place for some time.⁶ It appears to have died out first among the western tribes. Although it was performed to a limited extent among the Kuanyama in 1900 (Uejulu's reign), and was still compulsory among the Ombandja in 1914 when it was finally abolished. The Kuanyama chief, Uejulu, was not circumcised, and when the custom stopped among the rulers, it soon ceased among the nobility, who were the last to conform to this custom. As the country of the Ambo became more and more unfertile and crowded, and the age of marriage became more delayed, circumcision lost its function as a preparation for marriage.

Originally, all boys had to be circumcised between the ages of ten and twelve. In Ondonga the rite was performed on youths between the ages

of sixteen and twenty, especially among those of the ruling classes. In Kuanyama the boys were circumcised at about the age of twenty-five, when they were old enough for a first marriage. Circumcision at such a late date would be painful and dangerous, and the "boys" would be too old for proper inculcation of tribal customs and laws. Furthermore, a king would not be circumcised after he came to the throne. A king who had not been circumcised was not allowed to live in the royal kraal. Haimbili is said to have been the last of the circumcised Kuanyama kings.⁷

Circumcision among the Kuanyama is called *okua pita etanda*. This name implies that the circumcised have access to the *etanda*, the assemblage of men. The Kuanyama up to a short time ago had access to the *etanda* through their second marriage.

Brinker gives the following details⁸: "Circumcision is not a common custom, as among the Herero; for the most part boys of the chief's family and other nobility are circumcised between the ages of ten and twelve years. The present chief Uejulu is not circumcised. The act itself is designated *okukengha* (from *oku*, to cut, and *ekengho*, prepuce). The occasion is celebrated by drinking and eating. The man who performs the operation is usually a medicine-man. He must be well entertained, otherwise he might fail due to his physical weakness. The instrument used in the treatment should be a sharp flint stone. But since this usually is lacking in Ovamboland, a knife may be used instead, which afterwards must be buried and allowed to rust."

An old informant relates⁹: "The boys were taken out into the bush and kept in booths for a month to six weeks. The boys wore goat skins and were smeared with white ashes. A medicine-man circumcised the youths by cutting away their fore-skins. Every night the boys danced, and meat and beer were brought out to them."

While the food of the initiates is said not to have been especially good, there is no mention

¹ NITSCHÉ (1913), p. 121. ² BRINKER (1900), p. 48. ³ KRAFFT (1914) p. 24. ⁴ HAHN (1928) pp. 27-8. ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶ Krafft writes concerning circumcision: "There is no ceremony for boys now. The former circumcision rites has not been given for fifty years. Circumcision was performed by a medicine-man from another tribe,

and it was done in the field outside of the tribal territory. After this the youths were men." Since this was written in 1914, the statement that the ceremony had not been given in fifty years is incorrect.

⁷ LOEB (1947), Field notes. ⁸ BRINKER (1900), p. 48. ⁹ LOEB (1947), Field notes.

made of hardships other than the circumcision itself. There seems to have been no whipping of the boys, although, the neophytes were given instruction in the mornings and afternoons. Perhaps the age of the candidates would account for an alteration in the usual mode of instruction into the tribal mysteries.

The only esoteric feature of the ceremony seems to be the use of the bull-roarer (*edila*). The boys were not told the nature of this instrument, but both they and their mothers at home believed that its humming sound was the voice of a giant bird called *edila* which swallowed the candidates. If a youth survived, it was because he had succeeded in passing through the anus of the creature. If, however, he succumbed to the circumcision, it was because he remained in the monster's stomach. The body was then secretly buried in the bush, and the mother, upon receiving her son's food basket back unemptied, knew that he was dead, but dared not mourn openly.

No women, children, or uninitiated were allowed near the camp under penalty of death, but old women past the menopause were permitted to bring in some of the food. The song sung by the boys about the *edila* was:

"It threw me up, and when I came down I fell into its mouth. Then I came out of its anus."

After having gone through this primitive death and resurrection ceremony, the boys were washed with dry meal, given new clothing, and allowed to leave. They were not given new names.

In olden times the bull-roarer was sounded for the death of a circumcised king. This was called *osinghuma*. The playing was done on the fourth day of mourning, and the layer stood in a crowd of initiated men, so that the uninitiated could not see the instrument.

"This was done to show that there no longer was a king, and that the mourning was no ordinary mourning."¹

Courtship.—Boys and girls court one another long before either is ready for marriage. Already, boys at the age of twelve commence teasing young

girls in the bush. There is no definite age at which Ambo girls come to maturity, because the *efundula* (girl's puberty) comes several years after a girl's first menstruation, and no particular attention is paid to this crisis. Menstruation is called *kohani* (*ko*, to ; *ohani*, the moon). Another word for menstruation is *elimono* (the verb is *okulimono*, to menstruate, or to see oneself as a grown up woman). Among the Okavango, girls are secluded at their first menstruation, but they have actual sexual intercourse long before.²

When Kuanyama boys are about fifteen they commence sleeping with young girls. This is called *okuuila*, as distinguished from *okuhaela*, to have intercourse. Theoretically, the boy sleeps only on the girl's arm, and the act is said to be done for the purpose of permitting the young people to become acquainted. The sleeping takes place in the kraals where the boy, before entering a strange kraal, must obtain the consent of the young men residing there. The kraal owner usually does not give his explicit approval to the young people's activities. The boys do not confine themselves to one girl, but consort with many in rotation.

This form of courtship helps to prevent illegitimate children and the early marriages which the barren nature of the land prohibits. The agricultural Okavango formerly permitted youths actually to cohabit with girls five or six years old, and with the full sanction of the girls' fathers for whom the youths were forced to work.³

The Kuanyama boys and girls meet socially at the *uaitana* dance, which may be held in the daytime, but usually is held on moonlight nights. The girls and boys line up in arcs opposite each other. A girl goes to the boy's side, picks a partner, and dances back with him to her own arc. Then, she allows him a choice of her mates. As they dance and sing, the boys and girls grasp one another. In other dances held at the same time the girls jump into the air, allowing their dresses to be slightly raised. The boys have a kicking dance in which they jump out from their group and kick as high into the air as possible, to the admiration of the girls.

The songs sung by the boys and girls are usually

¹ LOEB (1947), Text material.

² Reports (1932), p. 61. ³ Reports (1932), p. 61.

of a derisive nature. In one song a boy complains that he knows a certain girl who will not sleep with him because she prefers a rival. Again, a girl complains that a certain boy has beaten her because she would not sleep with him the way grown-up people do. He should see that she is still wearing the beads of a girl who has not as yet gone through the *efundula*. Still another girl actually invites a boy to extreme intimacy, suggesting that if she gets into trouble, the medicine-man (in this case always a woman) will help her out :

“*Bangulenge inga ndija kendudu.*
 “Stabbing me so I may go to the doctor,
Kenghinda loimbodi jamekulu.”
 Doc or’s basket herbs of my grand-
 for medicine mother.”

The girl dances while she sings this song. Every occasion in Amboland calls for a song and a dance except mourning. Then, the people merely sing their dirges.

The Engagement.—A girl from a prominent family may be betrothed in early childhood by her parents. Usually, the young people themselves take the initiative, more especially the girl. The female prerogative is common in agricultural, matrilineal societies, but is unknown in typical cattle-raising patrilineal societies, where a real bride-price is demanded.

The customary age of engagement for a young girl is fourteen or fifteen, while for young men it is between twenty-five and thirty because at earlier ages they are considered “mere boys”. A man is discouraged from early marriage by both his father and his mother’s brother because he will live in either one’s kraal until he has accumulated enough cattle to have a “second marriage” and a kraal of his own.

Estermann describes the engagement among the Kuanyama as follows¹ :

“Often the young man makes his first declaration of love at a nocturnal dance (*uaitana*). If the

young girl is agreeable, she does not give a definite response before having obtained the consent of her parents, especially of her mother; this consent is necessary in principle. It again is the girl who, at the next meeting, brings to her lover the reply of her parents. If this is in the affirmative, the young man hastens to send a young girl of his family to carry a basket of iron beads to his chosen one; this is the first step in the engagement and is called *okuputula*.”

“Some time afterwards the fiancée is invited to look for some piece of clothing at the kraal or her fiancé. If the kraal where the young man lives is far from the paternal home of the fiancée, she may spend the night, but in this case she always is accompanied by a young girl (who sees that no actual sex relations take place).

“This is the only occasion in which it is permitted the young girl to sleep in the kraal of her future husband—; at other times it is always the young man who goes to visit the kraal of the girl’s parents, if he desires to pass the night with her (thus insuring proper supervision).

If during this period of engagement the young girl is unfaithful, the rival must pay the fiancé a fine of chickens. (After marriage adultery is punished by a heavy fine in cattle.) If for one reason or another the engagement is broken, all objects, such as the bracelet, must be given back to the young man.”

While visiting his future bride a man has to be very circumspect about his future mother-in-law and her sisters, all of whom he calls *ngumueno*. The future son-in-law does not eat or sit on the ground with his intended mother-in-law. He averts his eyes in shame when speaking to her. He also avoids intimate contact with his future father-in-law and the brothers of the father-in-law (*taiemueno*). But he does not cast down his eyes in their presence. The man’s fiancée comes into less contact with her future in-laws, but she is less shy with her female future in-laws than with her male. These avoidance relationships persist even if the engagement is broken, and lose their rigidity only after a long and happy marriage.

¹ ESTERMANN (1934), p. 435.

THE SUPREME BEING IN THE BELIEFS OF THE BALOVALE TRIBES

C. M. N. WHITE

INTRODUCTION

THE TERM "Balovale tribes" here used is intended to cover the Lunda, Lwena, Luchazi and Chokwe inhabiting the Mwinilunga, Balovale and western Kasempa districts of Northern Rhodesia; a number of Ovimbundu reside in the same area.

In some ways it is probably true to say that the nature of Bantu thought upon metaphysical topics can be better understood by the detached observer than by the Bantu themselves both by apprehending what is dimly understood or so familiar that there is no occasion to define it, and also because with his wider knowledge he can penetrate more deeply. A belief in a High God or Supreme Being is usually said to be characteristic of the Bantu, but the conception of a High God is not uniform in all parts of Africa, in fact the exact nature of these beliefs is often of a very elusive character. One reason for this is that religious beliefs are often stratified and built up of many layers. We may compare the Englishman of to-day whose beliefs have evolved from Judaic monotheism reformed by Christ and St. Paul combined with a metaphysical theology derived from Plato and Aristotle.

We find this stratification in a marked degree in the Bantu beliefs in a Supreme Being. At one end of the series is a belief in a designer and maker of the universe, a God who is one, a detached being beyond the reverence of man, of whom concrete ideas are ill-defined. It has been said that the belief in him is a philosophy rather than a living faith. In some cases this belief is combined with a high conception of good and evil in the moral sense. At the other end of the strata this belief fuses into the reverential attitude adopted to certain of the forces of nature, because of their overwhelming and

inexplicable powers. This belief tends to embody these forces in such natural phenomena as thunder, lightening, rivers or the sea. In West Africa nature gods have developed a definite religious cult.

Among the Balovale tribes we find *Nzambi* (Lunda), *Zambi* (Chokwe), *Njambi* (Luchazi), *Kalunga* (Lwena) and *Suku* (Mbundu) as the names of this Supreme Being. But all these names are not always exclusive to one people, in particular the name of *Kalunga* seems to run through the whole group. Analysis of these terms indicates a number of distinct elements which can be identified.

I. KALUNGA

Surprise is sometimes expressed that the Lwena use the term *Kalunga* to denote the Supreme Being whereas their immediate neighbours use *Nzambi* or a kindred term. Actually the name *Kalunga* is widespread from South West Africa to the lower Congo and it is not surprising to find it among the Lwena; the surprising fact is that they did not adopt a derivative of *Nzambi* in addition.

The name of *Kalunga* is often linked to that of *Nzambi*; the Herero speak of *Njambi Karunga* and the Chokwe of *Zambi Kalunga*; the Ovimbundu know of *Kalunga* but not as a Supreme Being; van Wing quotes Kongo proverbs where *Kalunga* appears as a Supreme Being.

Baumann (*Schöpfung und Urzeit*) discussed the term *Kalunga*. He proposed to derive it from the root *longa* which in many African languages means a river, pointing out that *Kalunga* is used by the Ovimbundu to denote the sea, whilst among the Lwena, Chokwe and Lunda the sea is called *Kalungakwiji*. This is so but *lu* in *Kalunga* is low toned whilst *lo* in *kalonga* (river) in Lunda is high toned, and I think it is doubtful whether

we can accept this etymology. *Kalunga* like *Nzambi* and *Suku* is a word of which one can only speculate as to the etymology.

The Lwena often refer to the rain as *Kalunga* and the Luchazi who have no word for rain call it simply *mema* (water) or may use *Kalunga* for it. The Lwena also say that *Kalunga* has rumbled when there has been a clap of thunder. In the Lwena proverb :

Kalunga kachila mavu mutu anamono mushi lyamutondo

(*Kalunga* which makes the earth red has seen a man beneath a tree)

we have *Kalunga* associated with lightening. The lightening makes the earth red when it strikes. Missionaries have adopted the phrase *Kalunga kachila mavu* to translate "hell" and the same phrase is used in Lunda, *Kalunga kachinana*, literally red *Kalunga*. In these phrases *Kalunga* takes an inanimate concord which we should not expect if *Kalunga* were regarded as a person.

Thus far there are two clear meanings of *Kalunga* as the sea and as natural phenomena, especially associated with rain and lightening.

When we turn to the Ovimbundu we find *Kalunga* never means a Supreme Being; in fact he is contrasted with a Supreme Being in the proverb :

Suku wapanga, Kalunga wapangulula.

(God creates, *Kalunga* uncreates.)

Kalunga here seems to mean death or destruction or perhaps fate. The Mbundu divining basket contains a piece called *owato woKalunga* which is used to refer to disaster due to a boat capsizing or may indicate that the cause of a death has come from across a river in a canoe. One cannot be sure in this case whether *Kalunga* refers to the river or the death, perhaps the two ideas are combined. Tucker (*J. R. A. I.*, 1940) quotes an Mbundu divination concerning the burial of a dead chief whose spirit is made to say: *Sikasi chiwa mulo woKalunga* (all is not well with me here in the land of the dead). This cannot mean literally the grave, as the chief had not yet been buried. A similar text appears in Estermann (*Africa* 1939, 12, p. 81) who makes the half assimilated

African in Eastern Angola say of a burial: "*Kwalunga ngenda ni nai*" which he renders as "dans la tombe tu vas avec qui?"

Among the Lunda *kuKalunga* often means "to the grave"; the locative prefix is in the inanimate form. Perhaps the Lunda acquired the phrase from the Ovimbundu but they had fewer past contacts with them than the other Balovale tribes. The Lwena phrase *Kalunga kamazeze*, (*Kalunga* of the deep holes) seems to be another reference to burial, though this phrase too has now been adopted to render "hell" in Bible translations. Hambly (*The Ovimbundu*) records that suicides and murdered persons are buried by a river to ensure that there their spirits will not harass the living which again seems to link the grave with the sea or river, to both of which the word *kalunga* is applied.

A Lwena proverb carries the matter a little further: *MuKalunga mulakimwene* (at, or, in *Kalunga* you will see for yourself) a phrase addressed to one who disregards advice or warnings, and is thus told that he will learn to his sorrow.

Both the idea of destiny or fate and something unpleasant is implied.

Kalunga is often used to denote chance or fate; people speak of *kufwa Kalunga*, (to die an accidental death); an inexplicable swelling may be said to be due to *Kalunga*; a man who escaped injury by luck will ascribe his escape to *Kalunga*. At Balovale a large red tick-like insect which appears on the ground at the beginning of the rains is called *lisafu lyaKalunga*, (the tick of *Kalunga*) because no one knows where they come from.

Thus far we have had nothing of the anthropomorphic about *Kalunga*. Yet it is indisputable that to-day the idea is widespread that *Kalunga* lives in heaven. He is remote and has no worship addressed to him but he is all seeing and all knowing. Hence the Lwena proverb :

Vyasweka mavu Kalunga mwakavisolola.

(What the earth conceals *Kalunga* will eventually reveal.)

This sentiment is echoed in the Ovambo proverbs: "The eyes are not hindered by a hedge :

Kalunga has nothing hidden from him"; and "*Kalunga* does not ask for a witness, he sees for himself". One might rashly say that these were modern ideas, the result of evangelization, and that the Lwena proverb is an echo of the Day of Judgement. But it has an archaic relative concord which militates against its modernity, and Cavazzi who resided among the Bakongo from 1654-67 says: "In olden times the kings of Angola adored an idol called Calunga, i.e. the sea or according to others the Supreme Lord". This passage not only shows that in those early days *Kalunga* was associated with the sea but indicates too that as early as 1660 there was already a belief there that *Kalunga* represented a Supreme Being.

The Chokwe, Lwena and Luchazi seem to conceive of *Kalunga* also as a creator; the earth and the things upon it were made by *Kalunga*. Torday has recorded that the Bapinji upon the Kwilu refer to *Kalunga* as the Creator. There is evidence that the Ovambo regard *Kalunga* as the Creator. van Wing also refers to a Kongo proverb which he translates: "*Kalunga* est une charpente de maison, c'est-à-dire que rien n'arrête son regard", and he quotes other proverbs to the effect that *Kalunga* is everywhere on the earth and in the sky.

It is sometimes suggested that the African repeats in the spiritual world the system under which he lives on earth. *Kalunga* is the supreme chief; it is through his intermediaries, the ancestral spirits, that man can have contact with him. So the Lunda will add to an invocation to the spirits the words, *nikanka Nzambi ankwashuku*, (and may God our grandsire aid us)—*Nzambi* being the same as *Kalunga*. Among the Lwena is found an obscure phrase *Kalunga mwana mukishi* whose meaning is still unsolved. A suggestion that it means God, the epitome of greatness and goodness, because a *mukishi* (ancestral spirit) may help a man seems fanciful. The phrase has become a stereotyped formula and I have found no one to give a satisfactory explanation. One which was given to me was that *Kalunga* is likened to a *mukishi* because he affects a man suddenly without warning, which harks back to the idea of *Kalunga* as luck or chance. At any

rate both phrases show how the name of *Kalunga* (or *Nzambi*) is linked to the name of the ancestral spirits.

Baumann suggested that the idea of an earth god was predominant in *Kalunga* because of his association with the underworld and the grave. This view ignores the clear stratification of the various concepts which exist about the name. The starting point may be the Mbundu usage of *Kalunga*, for the Ovimbundu never identified *Kalunga* with their high god *Suku*. It is always the sea, death, or the grave. From the latter may easily develop the idea of inexorable destiny or necessity which at first may be rather a negative idea, like the *Kalunga* in the proverb which destroys what *Suku* has created, something which sets a limit to all powers and human desires. This idea is present among all the people who use the term *Kalunga*. The proverbs and saying of a people which are the best texts from which to reconstruct their ideas illustrate this well. With the growth of what may be termed a theistic belief, this *Kalunga* who represents inevitable destiny and the limit of human desires can easily be raised to a higher plane as a supreme power in the universe, a personal will, something no longer negative and destructive but positive, directing and creating.

The uses of *Kalunga* in connection with the weather provide a typical instance of the fusing of these ideas. At their lowest they can be regarded as identifying the extra human forces of natural phenomena with a power outside human contact, a rationalizing of the forces of nature under a single name *Kalunga*. Hence they may be invoked in connection with the sending of rain to ensure a good harvest. But when *Kalunga* becomes absorbed into a higher concept of an actively constructive High God, it is logical to merge these forces of nature into the wider and newer conception.

Kalunga is undoubtedly to-day among the Lunda, Lwena, Luchazi and Chokwe as well as among other tribes who use the title such as the Ovambo, a Supreme Being. Among the Ovimbundu the introduction of the word *Suku* seems to have prevented the term *Kalunga* from evolving

to this higher concept and it has remained much as the earth god as Baumann calls it. A web of gradual development of the ideas can be detected running through them though the sources from which the successive stages came remain unknown. One can only suspect that the successive waves of Bantu migration into Africa may well have played a part in the process, whereby the "earth god" developed into a "sky god" and eventually crystallized into a Supreme Being.

II. NZAMBI

Nzambi, *Zambi* and *Njambi* are titles as widely spread as *Kalunga*, for they extend from the Herero in South West Africa north to the Western Congo. Baumann tried to derive the root from that in the verb *umba*, to mould, because *Nzambi* is often spoken of as the moulder of the world. But like *Kalunga*, *Nzambi* is a word which cannot be derived satisfactorily and the proposed etymology is dubious.

Torday (*J.R.A.L.*, 1928) in his paper "Dualism in Western Bantu Religion", put forward the view that the Bakongo knew only *Kalunga* originally, and he cites Odoardo Lopez who was with them 1578-87 as recording that before the advent of Christianity the Bakongo knew no supreme god. Lopez does not mention *Nzambi*. Battel who was with them about 1600 wrote that the King of Kongo was honoured as if he were a god and styled Sambe (= *Nzambi*). Cavazzi refers to *Nzambi ampungo* and says that the Jagas had no idea of an intelligent and powerful god, only their ancestors. Merolla only mentions *Nzambi* in connection with a Christian ceremony, whilst Proyard in 1776 wrote that the Bakongo regarded *Nzambi* as the Creator and the Judge of men's actions. From this Torday infers that prior to Christian influence *Nzambi* was unknown and that early references to him can all be ascribed to evangelization. He points out that the first Portuguese on the lower Congo did not learn the Kongo language and used African interpreters from the West coast, and that on the West coast we have *Oyambe* and the Akan *Nyame* representing a Supreme Being. If the interpreters knew of

these names they might well have adopted them to translate the God of the missionaries. From this, by gradual change, came *Nzambi* and kindred titles. The Bakongo already had concepts of *Kalunga* and *Mbumba* who represented natural phenomena and the forces of nature, and they grafted the new name of *Nzambi* onto these ideas. Then gradually the name of *Nzambi* spread over the South West Congo and Angola.

On the other hand van Wing (*Etudes Bakongo*) maintains that the Bakongo had the name *Nzambi* from the earliest times. He summarizes the Kongo concept of *Nzambi*. He is the Creator of all things upon the earth; he knows the purpose of all things; all minerals, plants and living creatures are the "things of *Nzambi*". He made the sun and the moon and the stars; and even the sorcerers owe their powers to *Nzambi*. *Nzambi* created human beings and disposes of life and death. He may punish certain transgressions but he is not regarded as bestowing special blessings on the righteous. *Nzambi* is neither male nor female, nor human nor a spirit; if one asks: "Who is *Nzambi*?" the reply is: "*Nzambi* is *Nzambi*". This summary would apply very well to the conception of the Lunda, Chokwe and Luchazi about *Nzambi*. He is the Supreme Being although exact ideas held by individuals may be very vague, a fact which occurs equally among the Bakongo where van Wing cites the usage in religion of the phrase "*Desu, Maria, Nzambi ukumbona*" (God, Mary and *Nzambi* see me), but no one could explain the exact relation between God and *Nzambi* implied.

When however *Nzambi* is compared with *Kalunga* as represented in the beliefs of the north-western tribes in Northern Rhodesia a number of contrasts appear. Whereas proverbs and sayings about *Kalunga* are common, the name of *Nzambi* is rarely found in Lunda and Chokwe proverbs. This is not probative of anything for E. Gray (*African Studies*, 1944, p. 103) records only one to the Supreme Being in over four hundred Nyanja proverbs whereas Burton (*ibid.*, 1943) quotes several for Luba. van Wing also quotes quite a number of proverbs which introduce the name of *Nzambi*.

It was pointed out above that the Lunda includes the name of *Nzambi* in invocations to ancestral spirits just as the Lwena do the name of *Kalunga*. *Nzambi* is often spoken of as the owner of human beings; *nkaka* in Lunda and its equivalents in the other languages means not only a grandparent, it is also the term used to denote a slave owner in relation to a slave,¹ as in the Lwena and Chokwe proverb: "If you are familiar with a slave he will be impertinent to his owner". Thus when a man refers to himself as *muntu waNzambi* or *mutu waKalunga*, it is usually taken as being a technical expression to denote a freeborn man but in fact implies an admission that he is however owned by *Nzambi* or *Kalunga*.

Among the Lunda the name of *Nzambi* may be heard in common speech, jokes and oaths. Expressions such as "If *Nzambi* is willing" may be modern in origin, even anglicisms, but are more likely analogous to the mention of *Kalunga* in such phrases as were mentioned above where the sense is often chance or fate. Certainly the name of *Nzambi* has no binding force in the sense of swearing to tell the truth and when used by an excited man to emphasize the truth of a statement merely represents an ejaculation.

Struyf (Congo, 1939, p. 14, "L'Etre Suprême chez les Tutshokwe") quotes numerous texts to show that the Chokwe regard *Nzambi* not as remote and detached but as taking a close interest in human affairs, e.g.:

Pwo niwapwa nijimo, kusema, ana kufwa hakufwa wika, muvivwa mahanjika ngwenyi: "Zambi shili akwete, kema liaka akwetu mapwa nimajimo masema, ana makola?"

(If a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth and always her children die, you will hear her say: "*Zambi* is spiteful, why do my fellows become pregnant and give birth and their children grow all right?")

Opinion may differ as to how far these texts do represent *Nzambi* as taking a close interest in human affairs; it might equally be said that they

represent a philosophy rather than a living faith which enables the woman to criticize *Nzambi* as spiteful because her children die.

What does deserve to be emphasized is the absence from the concept of *Nzambi* of most of what Baumann describes as the attributes of the earth god *Kalunga*. No one calls the sea *Nzambi* nor is his name used of the rain and natural phenomena although he may be spoken of as being responsible for them. Death and the grave are not literally labelled *Nzambi* in the manner in which they may be called *Kalunga*. Indeed *Nzambi* is primarily a sky god and a creating power, not a destroyer who in some contexts is more or less divested of the attributes of a Supreme Being. This distinction between *Nzambi* and *Kalunga* seems to be well marked; hence if we consider that the theistic conception of *Kalunga* was grafted onto an earlier different conception, we must admit that the concept embodied in *Nzambi* did come later than the most primitive elements embodied in *Kalunga*. But it does not seem possible to follow Torday and see in *Nzambi* a recent importation from the West coast, for it is impossible to account for such a wide dispersion of the name in the short time which that theory would allow.

III. SUKU

The puzzling title of *Suku* among the Ovimbundu is a high god and a sky god; a creator contrasted with the destructive force of *Kalunga*. The derivation of *Suku* is unknown and only among the Nyaneka does there seem to be any parallel in the name of *Huku*.

Nevertheless although *Suku* seems rather different from *Nzambi* and *Kalunga* at first sight in being actively contrasted with one conception of *Kalunga*, there are other elements present. Hambly was told by the Ovimbundu that *Suku* was associated with rain although his name was not used to refer to it. The association of *Suku* with water and food is a parallel of the association of *Nzambi* and *Kalunga* with these necessities of life. *Suku* in fact seems to be a close counterpart to *Nzambi* in his attributes.

¹ "God's slave": cf. the same expression among Mohammedans.

IV. CREATION MYTHS

The Supreme Being in relation to creation myths is worthy of a special note. After analysing a great many African creation myths Baumann pointed out that the creative power of the Supreme Being in these myths was focussed upon the creation of the first man. African mythology concentrates upon the way in which this first man was created rather than on the creation of the universe as a whole. Indeed in many stories the rest of the universe is taken for granted.

One Lunda version of the story runs as follows. *Nzambi* first created two sexless beings with no genitalia. This condition dissatisfied them and one of them went to *Nzambi* who decided to remedy the matter. He gave the visitor two packets of medicine, one for himself and one for his companion. The next morning the visitor found himself changed into a man, but on examining the other packet he found it smelling as if it had gone bad, so he threw it away. On reaching his fellow and showing him the transformation wrought the latter decided to visit *Nzambi*. *Nzambi* asked him whether the first visitor had not brought him a packet of medicine, and on being assured that this was not so he made the necessary transformation and the second visitor became a woman. Thereafter the newly-created man and woman had connection, but *Nzambi* decreed that as man had done wrong in throwing away the packet of medicine destined for his wife, henceforth man must pay for the privilege of having connection with a woman, by paying a dowry if he wished to marry her, or her hire if she was a prostitute.

Another Lunda version tells how God descended on a rainbow, created a man and woman and told them to reproduce themselves. He also put *akishi* (ancestral spirits) into their bodies to survive them after death and so created the first ancestral spirits.

Akin to these stories is the association of *Nzambi* with what may be called the Tower of Babel motif. According to this, man built a great tower to the sky to listen to what God was saying. One version says it fell because termites ate the lower timbers, another that *Nzambi*

himself hurled it down in his wrath. Many of the people who built it were killed and the rest scattered to found different tribes speaking different languages. This tower was known as *Kaposhi* and one version of the story sites it in the Mwinilunga district and another near Lake Dilolo.

To show how fortuitous is the association of the Supreme Being with some of these stories it may be mentioned that there are other versions into which the name of *Nzambi* does not enter. *Kaposhi* or *Kambwe* is the name of one of the Lwena clans and is said to have sprung from *Kaposhi-kaMununga*, sister of *Chisewa* of the *Mbuze* clan. The people of *Chisengo-chaNgalango*, wife of *Ndalamuhitanganyi*, the traditional founder of the Lwena people, said that the *vaka kambwe* were only slaves. The latter were annoyed and said that if they were so despised, they would go away. So they began to build a village on a tower but it collapsed. The formulae of this clan begins: "*Kambwe Kaposhi kaMununga vanungile panda, vayile mwilu*" (. . . *Kambwe* . . . they fitted forked sticks together and went up on high).

Yet another version of the same story says that a child cried for the moon wanting to wear it round its neck like a Conus shell ornament, so the elders built a tower to try and reach the moon.

This motif occurs among the Luba Sanga who say that *Mununga Pande* conceived a desire to obtain the moon, and built a tower on the top of a hill for the purpose, but it unfortunately collapsed through attacks of insects and the rain. Indeed over the Southern Belgian Congo the *Kaposhi* story is associated primarily with the dispersal and migration of peoples, and the Supreme Being seems not to enter into it. In the Lwena version *Kaposhi kaMununga* was a woman, whereas in the Luba version quoted by Grevisse (*C.E.P.S.I. Bull.* 2, 1946-47) *Mununga Pande* was a man.

One's first impression of these myths is to see in them the indirect influence of Christian teaching and one may indeed point to the fact that the first Portuguese missionaries were already busy on the lower Congo before 1500. Yet to ascribe all

these legends which incorporate an almost anthropomorphic Supreme Being to missionary influence is probably going too far.

Unlike many African tribes the Balovale peoples have not got a large number of titles for their Supreme Being, but mention should be made of *Samatanga* which echoes the idea of a creator and *Sakapanga* which is often said to be derived from the stem *panga*, to divide, meaning the one who shares fairly the necessities of life among mankind. This may be the correct derivation, but *panga* (to make), a wide spread Bantu root occurs in Luchazi and Mbundu and may be the meaning here also. The fact that *panga* in Lwena means to share is not conclusive where such wide spread terms as names of the Supreme Being are involved.

V. FERTILITY RITES

Invocations for rain at planting time and their association with the Supreme Being also deserve a special word. The ceremony of *musolu* which occurred among the Lunda but not among the other Balovale tribes appears to be fast going out of use. It seems to linger on chiefly at Mwini-lunga and as the rain there usually arrives early in the season, the ceremony is not an annual event.

Information collected provides the following data. The *musolu* would be held if no rain had fallen by November. There was no special rain maker and the village-head would be master of the ceremony. A *mucha* tree was chosen and a path scuffled from it either to the main village path or to another tree, crossing the main path. The village-head makes invocation at this tree marking the environs with red and white clay, and the assembled company in the same way, the red clay being used to mark lazy cultivators. He addresses the names of the ancestors of the community, including those who were great hunters or cultivators or collectors of honey, and includes the name of *Nzambi*, the universal

provider of life. Meanwhile two wooden stakes are carved in human form, one male with a phallus and the other female with a vagina. These are set up by the *mucha* tree facing each other as if to have connection. From either side of the *mucha* tree a rope is stretched to terminate on either side of the scuffled path at a peg. The village-head sits between these ropes and hand the seeds to the headman who receives them and mixes them with certain medicines. At the end of the ceremony the company disperses leaving the seeds in a trough of medicine. Later when the rains come all return to divide out the medicated seed which they mix with their own when planting.

In this ceremony the ancestral spirits and *Nzambi* are linked together to enable man to be assured of a successful cultivating. It is universally agreed that the rains and the germination of the seeds can only be ensured by *Nzambi* but he is not approached directly, instead the ancestral spirits who are an integral part of the community are invoked and *Nzambi* is joined to the invocation.

* * *

Finally a word as to the often repeated statement that missionaries often report as African beliefs what are in fact merely reflections of their own teaching. Undoubtedly missionary teaching is having a not inconsiderable effect upon the modern concepts to which the titles of *Nzambi* and *Kalunga* are applied. It is defining more clearly the monotheistic outline and removing the consciousness of the oldest most primitive elements inherent in *Kalunga*. But if the original pre-evangelization concepts had not contained the nucleus of a Supreme Being they could hardly have been adopted so successfully by missionaries. There is plenty of evidence that these concepts were already built up of several strata before the first Christian influences appeared on the scene to add yet a further layer to the strata.

BURNING THE BUSH FOR GAME

W. SINGLETON FISHER

THE LUNDA and indeed many of the African tribes have annual organized burns with the object of killing game. In the Lunda territory there are areas of country called *ikuna*,¹ where the trees are short and stunted, and the grass, growing long and rank, takes longer to dry than the more wooded country around. Late in the dry season, which lasts five or six months, when most of the country is burnt quite bare of cover, the *makuna* are often still unburnt thereby providing shelter for game. These areas are burned in an organized manner called *kwocha ikuna* (to burn the *ikuna*), *kukuña ikuna* (to drive the *ikuna*) or *kudinda ikuna* (to encircle the *ikuna*).

The chiefs claim the right to prevent the public from burning the *makuna* (plural of *ikuna*) until dry enough for a communal "burn" under their control. Thus the chiefs send messages to the neighbouring chiefs and to their own villages warning them that they must not *ocha kwadi* (burn for nothing) for they intend having an organized burn late in the dry season. The ordinary passer-by who has no interest in the organized burn is tempted to burn off the country casually (*ocha kwadi*) so that he can clear away the undergrowth and more easily find and dig up rats to eat. When he hears this warning from the chief he desists for fear of being beaten.

The first of these organized burns which I attended was thirty years ago. A message had been sent out to the villages giving the people the date on which they were to assemble. At about eleven o'clock on the day arranged thirty men and boys, armed with bows and arrows or muskets, arrived at a pre-arranged spot on the edge of the *ikuna* which was to be burned. They had no special leader.

The *ikuna* was an area of irregular shape about

nine square miles in size. After considerable argument amongst the hunters six couples were selected and sent off to pre-arranged stations more or less evenly distributed around the *ikuna*. These couples were given instructions not to start burning until those at the station furthest to windward had given the signal by starting the fire. I joined one of the couples. When they reached their station (*ijiku*) the men each began plaiting a long rope of grass, choosing for the purpose a very fine, inflammable grass which plaited well, and made a soft rope, easily rolled up round a man's shoulder in a big coil. This rope was called *mudindu*, from *kudinda ikuna* (to encircle the *ikuna*).

As soon as the men who were with me saw a column of black smoke billowing up to windward, each set fire to the end of his rope and, turning his back on his mate, ran to the station nearest to him, trailing the burning rope and paying it out as it burnt shorter. In a surprisingly short time the circle of fire, several miles in circumference, was complete. The men explained to me that it was very important that the circle should be completed without delay because many of the bigger game were quick at recognizing their danger and, as soon as they saw any smoke at all, rushed for the nearest gap and escaped.

Before many minutes passed a duiker came galloping out dazed and confused by the roar of the fire and half suffocated with smoke. It was shot. The flames rose to a height of about twenty feet and surged inwards towards the centre. Flocks of birds of prey, which I believe were black harriers, hovered high above the smoke, swooping to pick up the insects as they fled from the fire. The birds seemed to bear a charmed life as often they appeared to go right through

¹ The word *ikuna* is probably derived from the verb *kukaña* to surround, or to hunt by surrounding; it

would be difficult for a Lunda to say *ikuña* smoothly so he slipped into *ikuna*.

the flames. Occasionally the flames died down for a few moments where they reached bare patches or where the grass was shorter or greener or when there was a lull in the wind. It was at these moments that some of the animals rushed through to be met by a fusillade of arrows and shots. The heat was terrific and the ground so hot that the men stripped bark off the trees and tied it on their feet as rough sandals. We could catch glimpses through the smoke of other members of the hunt all pointing their arrows or guns towards the flames.

Shots were heard in the distance and a party of boys, who had been detailed to act as "police", rushed off with shouts of glee to see if any "pirates" were stealing the game which was our due. I later learned that they caught an old man and a boy who had killed a bushbuck and were making away with it to their village. They beat them both and confiscated the buck.

"Have you heard the *chivudi*?" shouted one man above the din of the fire.

"No, not yet", yelled another, "It isn't time yet."

The *chivudi* is a terrific roaring noise made by a fierce whirlwind, which often takes place towards the end of the burn, and is welcomed by the hunters, as it is believed to be a mighty spirit without whose aid they will not make a good kill.

A bush-pig came galloping out near to us and was rolled over by a shot through the heart. A little further off a water-buck went trotting by partly stupefied by the smoke. A man drew his bow and let fly an arrow at it. To my astonishment the flimsy arrow, a small iron head set on a light reed, split a large sapling. The buck escaped.

We could now see the walls of fire drawing in towards the centre. Arrows whizzed in all directions and there was much banging of muskets. The smoke was choking and half-blinding us. Suddenly there was a deafening roar; it was the voice of the *chivudi*, accompanied by a violent whirlwind, and the fire was out. A pall of dark dense smoke hung everywhere, lit up with branches of trees which were burning in all

directions. The ground was covered by a thick carpet of black ash interspersed by hot patches of the grey ash of smouldering logs.

The hunters compared notes and found that several small antelope had been killed besides the bush-pig. These were left in the keeping of the police, while the hunters scattered in search of other game which might have been disabled by the heat and would fall an easy prey to them.

That evening we lay camped in the open by a stream. Far into the night the hunters by the camp fires exchanged tales of former burns that had passed into history. One of them recounted how, twenty or thirty years earlier, a herd of eleven elephant had been destroyed in this very same *ikuna*. When the elephants saw the distant circle of smoke, instead of attempting to escape, they pulled up bundles of grass with their trunks and piled them over themselves, thinking that the grass would protect them. When the flames came each elephant became the centre of an enormous bonfire while the native danced around and clapped their hands with glee. The elephants, their hides peeling off them in strips, either fell down stupefied with smoke or staggered to the nearest stream and lay down in the water. They were all speared to death and the whole population of the surrounding country gorged themselves on the meat. Another hunter told a story of a more recent burn where a herd of buffalo had had their horns completely scorched off—*yoku*, *yoku*, to give the ideophone he employed. All these people were utterly callous at the thought of the cruelty to dumb animals and some of the hunters laughed pityingly at me when I tried to draw their attention to it.

On the following day three such smaller burns were carried out but these yielded very little game. In the afternoon all the game we had killed was carried to a clearing in the forest near the village of Malovu, the headman who had jurisdiction over the *makuna*. He and some fellow headman from neighbouring villages seated themselves in a group on little stools near the meat. The hunters crowded round making a terrific babel, shouting to the headman, each claiming the best portions of meat for himself.

The buck had all been dismembered for easier distribution. Each hunter who had killed a buck was given the "head" (this technical term includes the head, neck, heart and lungs and may only be eaten by the hunter lest the magic of his hunting prowess be stolen from him), and a leg. A leg also of each buck was taken by Malovu who doubtless shared them with the other headmen. Malovu then began to distribute the remainder of the meat to all who had taken any part in the "burn". All this was accompanied by much shouting and arguing, the men who had not

actually killed anything clamouring loudly for their share. This process of distribution is called *kwanzañena*, from *kwanza* (to eke out) + reciprocal suffix *ñana* changed applicative *ñena*.

The excitement was mounting rapidly. Suddenly there was a concerted rush from all sides and everyone scrambled for the meat that was left. It was all done in perfect good humour and with shouts of laughter. Apparently this was the usual denouement of the *ikuna* hunt and is laughingly called *kuhukula* (to snatch), from ideophone *huku!* used for the action of snatching.

SPIRIT NAMES AMONG THE CENTRAL BANTU

J. T. Munday

ON THE map it will be noticed how an arm of the Belgian Congo is thrust right into the heart of Northern Rhodesia from the north-west. This arm, together with that part of N. Rhodesia which nearly surrounds it, is inhabited by a group of very nearly related tribes, the Lamba, the Lala and the Aushi, and a number of lesser tribes who distinguish themselves by prefixing *Bena-* (folk) to the name of the area in which they live: such as the *Bena-Maswaka*, the *Bena-Bukanda* and others. All these peoples belong to the Central Bantu and claim to have migrated originally from the neighbourhood of the Lualaba River in the Belgian Congo. The Nsenga tribe which lives on the eastern boundary of N. Rhodesia is also very closely related and claims a common origin.

A proverb of the Aushi tribe says: "The Creator made the spirits, but Chiwa he did not make." This article is a short study of beliefs about spirits found amongst the tribes named. There are slightly different customs in the different areas, but the beliefs which lie behind them seem to be the same. Clear-cut theories which the African can put into words are, of course, not to be found.

I. THE NAME IS THE SPIRIT

Every African man, in N. Rhodesia, has to carry an identity book, known as a *Chitupa*. In this small, pale-green book is entered the owner's name, the name of his village headman, and the name of his chief. The law directs that an employer shall make certain entries in this *Chitupa* when he engages its owner: the employer also, probably, notes his new servant's name as it is written there. If the owner comes from one of the tribes with which we are concerned it soon becomes clear that he has more than one name.

Letters come to him addressed with a variety of names; his friends come to call on him and hail him loudly by these names, and yet others as well.

Investigation brings to light the fact that the Africans of these parts, whether man or woman, have two classes of names: (a) spirit-names and (b) names of manhood and womanhood. Each has one (a few have two) of the names of the first class, and one or more (some have many more) of the names of the second class. It is by these names of manhood and womanhood that they prefer to be called, some are traditional African names of these parts, some are debased European words, some are European given- or family-names, some are nick names, given owing to some peculiarity, some are names given at baptism. All of these names of manhood and womanhood (except the last) can be, and are, changed for any and no reason, and according to who is addressing the owner. The spirit-name however is never changed, once it is finally given. It is of this spirit-name that the Lala aphorism says: "The Name (*isina*, Lala; *zina*, Nsenga) is the Spirit (*umupafi*, L.; *mzimu*, N.).

Officials now prefer the African to be registered under his spirit-name, owing to its never being changed; but there are two practical disadvantages which weigh against its being used for registration purposes: an African of the tribes with which we are concerned is very shy of using it for himself or another, and, in some parts, the spirit-names are so few in number that the majority of persons in one area may share half a dozen names. However, as has been said, the spirit-name is never changed from the mother's back to the grave.

The giving of the spirit-name (*ilyākufyalwa*, "of birth", L.; *lapankombo*, "of the navel", N.) is regarded as an event of the greatest importance. Every child born is regarded as the "come back" (*icibwela*, L.; *awela*, N.) of some dead person,

either of the same or the opposite sex. The child has to be given the spirit-name of that dead person; it will be seen that the spirit-names are common to the two sexes. Before a name can be given it has to be discovered whose "come back" the baby is. It must be remembered that the mental and social horizon is small, so that the names of a great number of dead persons will not occur to those who are finding a baby's name. In one Nsenga village of fifty-five huts, seventeen spirit-names were found; one middle-aged woman shared her name with seven of her children and grandchildren. In one class of seventeen boys in a Lala school, eleven were called either Mwape, Ngosa, Chisenga or Kunda (these boys came from three chief's areas).

When the navel-cord has fallen off there comes the day for discovering whose spirit the baby has inherited. Before the recent beginning of urbanization, the naming of a baby always took place under the overwhelming influence of the mother's clan. The central Bantu are matrilineal and practise matrilocal marriage, and are exogamous from their clans; so each village was, to a very great degree, the village of one clan. Hence, human nature being what it is, it usually happened that a baby was reckoned to have inherited its spirit from one of its mother's clan; in fact a Lamba aphorism goes so far as to say: "An important thing with spirits is the clan". However it is not an uncommon thing for a baby to be given its name from its father's clan. This seems always to have been possible, but will doubtless become much more common under the new conditions of life. In towns, where the wage-earning father looks on himself as the head of his family, there are signs of a desire for patrilineality; even clan exogamy is breaking down; in the Broken Hill urban area, members of other tribes say that the Aushi men do not even trouble to ask a girl's clan before they go to bed with her.

Under the "chairmanship" of the baby's maternal grandmother (usually), a prolonged discussion took place to determine the baby's name, and agreement usually fell on the name of some "lucky" forbear of the mother's clan. Sometimes, in a joking way, one of the old folk would

ask the baby if he were so-and-so; and if the baby, from reasons of wind, smiled, the old lady would cry out: "There, I was right, he is indeed so-and-so". Amongst the Lalas (as amongst the Lambas) if, after naming, a child begins to ail, it is thought that the wrong names has been given, and divination will be used to determine the right one. Amongst the Aushis the father is often asked whom he dreamed about during his wife's pregnancy, this being thought to show which spirit has been trying to indicate that it has become incarnate in the baby. If the mother has been dreaming about the same dead person, then certainly will that person's name be given. Amongst the Aushis and the Lalas too, a name will be given one evening, and if the baby cries that night, another name will be tried the following day, and so on, perhaps half a dozen times, until the baby passes a quiet night, when the last name tried will be the one it is known by for life.

Every member of a family will hope that it is the spirit of a "lucky" person which has become incarnate in the baby, and the incarnation of an "unlucky" spirit is much dreaded. Other things being equal, a person known to have been "lucky" will have more "come-backs" than someone less lucky. In one village in Lalaland there may be a dozen children and young folk all called (e.g.) Mwape, all "come-backs" of a dead Mwape (b) who was well known to all the elderly members of the village. In the neighbourhood there may be a score of other Mwapes, all regarded as the "come-backs" of this same Mwape (b); this Mwape (b) was the "come-back" of yet another even more famous Mwape (c), as were a number of other Mwapes, some still living, some dead. Most of these latter, again, have "come-backs" in the new generation in the neighbourhood. In this way, in any one area, a large proportion of the inhabitants will bear one name.

When the baby becomes a toddler he will be given the first of his "names of manhood" (or womanhood). The spirit-name, however, remains unchanged. The names of manhood and womanhood are the ones by which a person is spoken of; many of these names are those used as spirit-names by others.

When a boy or girl begins to grow up, he begins to wish to have children in the family called inheritors of the same spirit as himself. He will tease the elders, when the time comes for a child to be named, that the child may be his namesake (*imboswa*, L.). In joking conversation, if little (e.g.) Ngosa has been misbehaving, the elder Ngosa will be rebuked: "You are a naughty child, Ngosa!" Amongst the Nsengas the elder child will give a bead necklace to his baby namesake, "to make sure the name". If a young man or woman has not persuaded the elders to give some child the same name as his, he will try to prevail on them to do so when his own first child is born. It is, therefore not uncommon for a father or mother to have their eldest child as an *imboswa*. A person and his *imboswa* are looked on as having inherited the same spirit. Amongst the Nsengas, when it has proved impossible to decide on a name which belonged to a forbear, they will get over the difficulty and say: "Let us call him by the same name as little So-and-so, he has proved to be "lucky".

At death, when the corpse has been buried, the spirit is believed to remain in the neighbourhood in an especially dangerous condition, only too willing to cause a nuisance, or worse, serious harm, by bringing disease, death or disaster, if it is not propitiated. So a day is chosen for a beer-drink, at which an offering of a little beer will be made to the spirit. The day chosen will be far enough off for all those who by custom should come, to receive long enough warning; it may be three or four months after the death. Beer is set to brew (to some degree the grain available will determine the date, which sometimes has to be put off till after harvest). Before the yeast is added, in the hut where the brewing is being done, a little of the liquid is poured on the ground, and the spirit told that it is in its honour that the brewing is taking place.

Three days later, when the beer is ready, the real offering takes place. This is done to-day sometimes in the hut, usually the offering is poured under a tree at the edge of the village, or at the grave. A hole, about a foot deep, is dug, about as wide as will take the forearm, and a small

quantity of the beer is poured into the hole, whilst the spirit is informed that the offering is for him. The spirit is asked not to harm the people, but to help them. The offerer will normally be a senior of the dead person's clan.

If the dead person has an *imboswa* present, his spirit is recognized as being in that *imboswa*, yet the propitiation ceremony is done to the same spirit which is not in the *imboswa*. The spirit which is in the *imboswa* will do no harm, but that which is not in him may do very grievous harm. Within the limited horizon of any community there is only a limited number of spirits with which to reckon. In no sense can they be regarded as being individual spirits, rather they are to be thought of as "pool-spirits", from which each person at birth is possessed by a "part"; though in a sense a part of a spirit is within him, that part is still identical with that which is without. An African of this region may have to reckon with a score of "pool-spirits", he recognizes that there are others, but for practical purposes he is not concerned with them.

Although a person's spirit-name is well known to all his relatives and fellow-villagers, he does not readily tell it to strangers, nor does he care to be called by it; he believes that a witch may entrap a spirit more easily, if he knows its name. The spirit entrapped by a witch is only that "part" which is in one person.

II. FEAR OF SPIRITS

Spirits, though for practical purposes limited in number, are always a potential source of trouble. One may enter a baby, and not be recognized, and so be angered. A spirit may wish to become incarnate and be unable to find a baby in which to be born; it is spirits which bring disaster on those who break taboos in the majority of cases, and on those who neglect customs; spirits are apt to take offence with little or no reason (a small attendance at a funeral is quite enough to cause great anger); above all else some spirit may be "unlucky" in a certain family. However, though spirits are always a potential source of trouble, those "parts" which

have lately left a body have especially to be propitiated—as the newly departed is more vivid to the minds of the survivors, so is his spirit more powerful for evil.

On the edge of a village (especially amongst the Lalas who have, till lately, been more untouched by European ideas) is a number of miniature huts, usually roughly built, just rickety little roofs perched on some uprights. At various spots round a village as many as half a dozen may be found. Offerings of pinches of meal, of a few beads, or of a few grains of corn are to be found in them. These spirit-huts are built to the more important dead: to the last village-headman, to one who was well-known enough to have had a number of “come-backs” named for him, or to a recognized elder of the clan. When offerings are made many members of the clan may be present, but only one (in some districts) who has inherited the departed’s name may actually make the offering. Often accompanying the offerer, and carrying the offering, will be one who is a member of another clan, a clan which is in joking and funerary relationship with the offerer’s clan (*umwāli*, L.; *umunungwe*, Bemba).¹

If a person loses his temper with someone he will probably call him a *cibanda*. This term is applied to a frightening person or beast, or to an enemy or bad tempered person. The fact that an African of these tribes very frequently applies the term to certain spirits, has led some observers to suppose that there is a species of evil spirit called *cibanda*. This seems not to be the case. All spirits are potentially dangerous, some are known to be inimical to certain persons or families, though the same spirits may be friendly to others. Any spirit is a *cibanda* to one to whom it is inimical. It is the usual custom amongst the Nsengas, if a name has been given to a child who soon afterwards dies, to give the same name, though perhaps with misgivings, to another new baby of the same family. If this second child dies then it is said that this spirit is “unluckily”, a *cibanda*, to that family. Often the same name is

then given to another new baby, but of another family in the neighbourhood; if that child dies too there is no doubt as to that spirit’s malignity in that neighbourhood, it is, there, a *cibanda*. They are not spirits of evil as such; in Aushiland, at least, there is a spirit of evil, which the creator did not make, *Chiwa*.

A Lalá woman, away from home with her baby and her little boy, had no fellow-clansman with her when her baby died. She herself mixed a little meal with some water, and poured it in offering to the spirit which had been in the baby, as the little boy said: “My mother had nothing else to offer to the *cibanda*”. Until the child died the spirit was just the *umupafi* of dead So-and-so now in the baby, but after death under distressing conditions it was, to the mother and little brother, a *cibanda*.

When a mother is having a difficult labour, and the diviner has given the reason not to be the infidelity of the husband, but So-and-so trying to be incarnate, she will call the spirit a *cibanda*, but once the birth is safely over, this very same spirit, now satisfied, may turn out to be a “lucky” one.

Amongst spirits which are to be feared are those which have been forgotten, and so have no “come-backs” to-day, because their very names have been lost. Some children are called after these spirits (Kaluwa is the name given amongst the Nsengas, “The Forgotten One”). The spirits which have been forgotten are supposed to wander through the world, sometimes dimly seen, in the shapes of hali-people; one leg, one arm, one eye and so on. These “ghosts” are known as *cilengwa-lengwa* (N. “created but forgotten”) and *luwe* (L. “forgotten”), and are thought sometimes to take possession of people, driving them mad, besides being able, sometimes, to become incarnate.

Although the most present fear may well be the fear of witchcraft, the fear of potentially dangerous spirits runs it a good second.

A propitiated spirit, propitiated either by

¹ An interesting development of this relationship is found at Broken Hill, the Bemba, and the tribes they conquered, on the one hand, and the Ngoni with the

tribes they conquered, on the other, now make a pair of nations related in this way, and perform each others funeral rites.

offerings or by becoming incarnate may prove to be a very helpful one to the person it is in. A person going on a journey will often in Lambaland and Lalaland go to his spirit-hut to say "good-bye", being sure that this will lead to his being guarded. It is to be noted that the spirit is "his" and also of the dead person. A man who is a successful hunter will be spoken of as one who is helped by "his" spirit, especially if his name is that of a great departed hunter.

It cannot be overstressed that amongst these peoples, as amongst other primitive races, everything is relative to the individual. One spirit may be generally lucky in the land, but to one man it may be a *cibanda*; any one spirit is of importance to a certain family group because for some reason or another its name is well known to the members, it is this spirit which will be supposed to be incarnate in a large number of babies in that family; one chief's spirit will be offered to as "the owner of the veldt" in an area by the majority of the folk there, because their foremothers "came into the country with him"; in the same area there may be another chief's spirit honoured in exactly the same way by a minority, and for the same reason. The mental horizon seldom stretches beyond a person's immediate family group: the rest of the world produces very little emotional reaction in the observer. The intruding European finds his actions and his customs regarded with a kindly detachment, and himself not accepted as really human, and his ideas of no importance: only his possessions are coveted. "Foreign" spirits are regarded by a family group much in the same way.

III. SECOND NAMES

As has been said, every person in this area takes other names besides his spirit-name from time to time; these are the names he is called by, but they are thought to have little importance and can be changed as often as is desired. Sometimes a child who has not got a true *imboswa* will, amongst the Nsengas call So-and-so his *imboswa* in a joking way, calling him by his own spirit-name; this is, however merely another variety of nick-name.

Spirits are believed to be able to enter into adults who become possessed dancers, and so on. "Foreign" spirits may suddenly enter a person and possess him, causing him great inconvenience, much as a European may suddenly arrive and unaccountably call a part of the forest his own; the spirits of "foreign" chiefs (presumably because they are the "foreigners" most likely to be known by name) are specially prone to enter grown-ups.

The normal way for a person to receive a second spirit is by becoming a chief. In this article "chief" will be used when these Africans themselves use the word *imfumu*. Different varieties of chieftainship are found amongst the Central Bantu, from the elaborate system of the Bembas, through the system of the "Royal Clan" as amongst the Lalas, down to the Nsengas, who name every village headman a "chief". This last may well have been the primitive form of chieftainship. The majority, at any rate, of the Central Bantu migrated from the Lualaba River from the seventeenth century onwards, and the unit of migration was the "clan village", so it was natural to call the village headman a chief.

It will be enough to describe what happens when one of these minor Nsenga chiefs obtains his "seat", the custom of "taking away" the chieftainship from the dead chief. A chief called Vwenga of the Honey-bird clan, whose name of manhood was Chibindi died, his successor was also called Vwenga, with the manhood-name of Sumaili. On Sumaili's death he was succeeded by a man whose spirit-name was Mwape (with a manhood-name of David); each of the three was sister's son to his predecessor. At the gathering which met to put Mwape (David) in his uncle's place, an elder of the clan spoke: "The uncle has come back; you will sit in the seat of Vwenga, therefore to-day we have given you the name, you are Vwenga": Beer was poured into the usual hole with the words: "Look after this man who has taken your name". During this prayer another senior clansman repeatedly called: "Moyo" (life); this calling went on for some time till drowned by the ululations of the women. The

new chief still had Mwape's spirit, but he now also had Vwenga's. I am told that when Sumaili succeeded *his* uncle the same ceremony was performed though both Sumaili and Chibindi had the same spirit-name, and indeed the younger was the *imboswa* of the elder. Finally the "arms" of the chieftainship were handed over with the words: "O come-back of Vwenga, these are his arms".

It seems then that it is impossible for these Africans to say (with the Christian European): "My spirit is that invisible part of me which is immortal" Rather must they say: "My spirit is 'part' of one of the pool-spirits, they are immortal, at my death that part will go wandering looking for re-incarnation, yet it will remain a part of the original pool-spirit, and it will try to enter into as many persons as it can, at the same time, and yet be elsewhere too; the spirit is immortal, but if the name is forgotten, so that it cannot become incarnate, it wanders through the world as a 'ghost'." The spirit is amoral, good to whom it is good, bad to whom it is bad.

An educated African was asked to try and put into words his beliefs about these spirits; he said: "They are something like kaffir-corn; the old root has many shoots around it; the owner transplants them elsewhere in his fields, and some in other fields. It is still the same kaffir-corn, but it is in many places, and through the years it spreads all over the land."

IV. THE POLITE PLURAL

In this area, as elsewhere, anyone other than a small child is addressed in the second plural, any senior is addressed in the third plural, and speaks of himself in the first plural. It is possible that such a custom originated in beliefs described here, in the identification of the one with the many, the many with the one. It is said that the great chiefs of the Bembas are addressed in the second singular, but these persons are also said to be identified so absolutely with their predecessors that it is difficult sometimes to determine whether one of them is speaking of himself or of a far distant predecessor.

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NOTES OF THE QUARTER

Negro Year Book, 1947. Tuskegee Institute is to be congratulated on the publication, under the editorship of Jessie Parkhurst Guzman, of the *Negro Year Book*, reviewing events affecting Negro life from 1941-46. The first Year Book publication was back in 1912 sponsored by the late Booker T. Washington, and since that date eight editions have been published.

The new Year Book is divided into five parts as follows: I. The Negro in the United States (pp. 1-481); II. The Negro in Africa (pp. 485-573); III. The Negro in Europe (pp. 577-99); IV. The Negro in Latin America (pp. 603-31); and V. An Annotated Bibliography. The first section, that dealing with the Negro in the United States, is divided into 22 chapters contributed by various authorities from Tuskegee and elsewhere. This is a mine of information dealing with race problems, civil and political rights, crime and health. The part played by the Negro in World War II is well dealt with, as also the Negro contribution to literature and the press, to art, music, the theatre and the world of sport. It includes list of Negroes who have attained doctorates and positions of distinction in higher learning.

Twelve chapters are devoted to Part II, the Negro in Africa, and each of these is contributed by H. A. Wieschoff of the University of Pennsylvania. These chapter headings are: Political Divisions of Negro Africa—Ethiopia since the War—Liberia in the World of To-day—the African in the Union of South Africa—Africans and the British Empire—Africans and the French Union—Africans and the Portuguese Empire—The Belgian Congo—Economic Development in Africa—The African as a Wage-earner—Africa and the Great Powers—The United States and Africa. This whole Part II gives a very condensed picture of the Negro in Africa from the point of view of political and economic consideration, both internal and in the perspective of world

affairs. There seems lacking however any reference to recent achievements in literature, education, Missions, religion or health policies. The picture seems very inadequate, and contributions from African authorities on some of these subjects would be a welcome feature of a future Year Book. Articles from local African authorities would carry more weight, and enhance the prestige and value of the Year Book.

The chapters dealing with the Negro in Europe provide interesting reading, and would be an eye-opener to many who, for instance, did not know of the existence of Negro communities living on the East Coast of the Black Sea, and speaking the Akhazian language in the Soviet Republic of Abkhazia.

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Central African Archives. This is the title of a handsome and attractive publication from Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, printed by the Government Printer, Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia. It is a historical account covering the years 1935-47 written by V. W. Hiller, the Chief Archivist for the three territories, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The account contains some well reproduced illustrations. On pages 13-15 is a summary of the main events concerning the development of these Archives. On 12 April 1935 was the promulgation of the "Archives Act" followed by the appointment of a Government Archivist in Salisbury. It is interesting to note that public interest in the value of historical records was in no small measure roused by the 1933 Historical Exhibition held first in Bulawayo and later in Salisbury, "towards which Dr. Gubbins and the Witwatersrand University contributed very generously" (p. 8). On 10 June 1938 was the promulgation of the "Printed Publications Act", followed by the issue of regulations for the destruction and transfer of public records. Compilation of printed rolls of pioneers and

police (1890) for municipality of Salisbury took place in 1940. The "Oppeinheimer Series" of publications was inaugurated in 1943. In July 1947 a Livingstone depot was opened for Northern Rhodesia and one at Zomba for Nyasaland.

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King George V Memorial Museum, Dar-es-Salaam. The report for 1947 reflects considerable development in this Museum during the year. "One of the outstanding incidents of the year was the formation of the Tanganyika Society", with headquarters at the Museum. The official journal is *Tanganyika Notes and Records*. The Museum is at present handicapped by the absence of paid collectors or technical workers, though Dr. Korabiewicz has been in the field collecting for 3½ months. Approximately 16,670 persons visited the Museum during the year, and weekly lectures were given in Swahili on Sundays starting in June, and covering the subjects displayed in the monthly exhibits. A library is being developed in connexion with the Museum.

* * *

Development in Northern Rhodesia. On 15 November, the Acting Governor announced that it was proposed to create the post of Director of Development, a full-time post which would carry a seat on the Executive Council and the chairmanship of the Development Authority. In particular the Director will be concerned to ensure the most economical allocation and use of the resources—labour and materials—available for approved schemes, and to coordinate departmental claims.

In spite of the difficulty of obtaining staff and materials, a start has been made with development work. Thus, the Forestry Department has carried out an aerial survey of the teak forests of southern Barotseland, progress has been made in consolidating the existing facilities for primary education with the emphasis on efficiency rather than on wasteful expansion, and the Development Authority is going ahead with plans to open up communications in Barotseland as a preliminary to full economic development of the area.

Land Problems in Kenya. The Governor of Kenya, Sir Philip Mitchell, in his famous dispatch on the agrarian situation in Kenya, has suggested that sound farming systems could probably be best developed through "clan farming" in which the disadvantages of the smallholding by itself are mitigated by various forms of cooperative activity within a group. Mr. Norman Humphrey, Senior Agricultural Officer in Kenya, in a paper on the Social life of part of the Kikuyu tribe, stressed the need to revive indigenous tribal organizations as an agency in the regeneration of the land. Dealing elsewhere with the northern Kavirondo area, Mr. Humphrey states that there is reason to believe that a reform in farming methods could increase the standard of living, while halting the deterioration of the soil and building up depleted fertility.

In northern Kavirondo, the Bukura Agricultural Training Centre is of particular significance in teaching sound farming methods. The centre was opened in 1924 with the primary object of training young Africans for agricultural service in the Native reserves. In 1933 an important step forward was the establishment of small holdings to demonstrate mixed farming methods to Africans. By 1941 thirteen mixed farms had been laid out, varying in size from 1½ to 7 acres each stocked with Native cattle. A typical farm of six acres, three of which are planted with crops and three laid down to grass, and in which terracing, contour planting and crop rotation are practised, has been shown to support an African family on an adequate diet, and to provide a surplus of some 120 shillings per year. The labour involved is equivalent to that of three adults working six hours a day. An average family could improve this living standard by farming an increased acreage with the help of farm animals.

* * *

Cooperative Movement in the Gold Coast. There has been a drive for expansion in this movement, to which considerable publicity has been given, while care has been taken to enlist the support of paramount chiefs and their councils by explaining to them the way in which

cooperation can help the prosperity of their people. Difficulties there have been, as in the promotion of Consumers' Societies, where lack of supplies of imported goods has hampered progress. Nevertheless an important step in this field has been taken by the organization by the Cooperative Federation of an Imports Department which has opened an account with the C.W.S. Bank in England with a credit of £25,000. Thus the foundations of a Cooperative Wholesale Organization have been laid. Progress has been particularly notable in the development of a cooperation in the sale and marketing of cocoa. During the year (1 April 1946 to 31 March 1947), the number of Cooperative Unions has increased from 9 to 11, the number of primary Societies from 97 to 105, and the number of farmer members from 6712 to 7907.

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Ten Year Plan for African Education in Tanganyika. The Tanganyika Development Commission has now re-examined, in consultation with the Educational Adviser to the Secretary of State, the whole question of improved educational facilities for Africans which was surveyed in the Ten Year Development Plan.

The educational work undertaken by the Germans before 1914 was drastically disrupted by the 1914-18 war and an almost fresh start had to be made by the first Director of Education appointed in 1920. In 1925 a State scheme of African education was introduced, with grants-in-aid for approved voluntary agencies. Expenditure, including provision for Indian and European education, rose from £18,000 in 1925 to £122,000 in 1931. Unfortunately after the economic depression of that year, expenditure on African education fell off. Some recovery was being effected during 1936-39 when war again intervened. From 1943, however, the number of Government and Native administration primary schools increased, the figures for 1938 and 1945 being respectively 92 and 217. The first woman education officer was appointed in 1939 to organize female education and in 1945 there were nine women officers in the Education Department.

Outside the category of schools officially recognized as such are the "Bush Schools" comprising both "catechetical centres" and Koranic schools. Such schools form a vast network. The base of the official educational system however is formed by the Village Schools, which are co-educational and cover Stds. I-IV. Government and Native administration village schools have an enrolment of about 25,000 pupils, while grant-aided village schools run by voluntary agencies have about 75,000 pupils. There are about 100 small non-aided village schools. District Schools provide the full primary course (Stds. I-VI) and have an enrolment of about 10,000. The majority are boarding schools while some are local day schools in towns and densely populated areas. There are at present nineteen Secondary Schools, of which eight are conducted by Government and eleven by voluntary agencies. Most of the secondary schools provide courses up to Std. X but three provide the full secondary course up to Std. XII, from which the entrance examination for Makerere College can be taken. There are at present 25 Tanganyika students at Makerere. Village school teachers are selected from Std. VI of district schools for a three-year course at one of fifteen grant-aided centres run by voluntary agencies or two Government centres. Senior primary teachers are given special instruction after Std. X at one Government and two voluntary agency centres. Apprenticeship courses in carpentry, building and tailoring, are conducted in five Government and four voluntary agency schools. The language of the Primary Schools is Swahili while English is the medium in Secondary School classes.

The new Plan deals with the development and expansion of Government, Native administration and grant-aided voluntary schools. It has been designed to provide a four-year school course for as many children as possible within the funds likely to be available, with the necessary superstructure of further education, both technical and academic, to the highest levels. It is calculated that at the end of 10 years there will be approximately a total of 282,000 pupils at school compared with the present figure of 112,000.

It is thought that to-day there are 600,000 children within the four-year age group of village schools, of whom about 16 per cent actually attend village schools. It has been estimated that in 1956 the number in the same four-year age group will have risen to 700,000 but it is hoped that there will be 250,000 children or 36 per cent of the total actually in the village schools.

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As we are having constant demand for **back numbers** of *Bantu Studies* and *African Studies* and as our stocks of certain numbers are exhausted, we would be very grateful if readers having any of the following numbers, which they no longer require, would communicate with us. The exhausted numbers are the following:—

Bantu Studies:

Vol. II, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4. (1923–1926).

Vol. III, Nos. 1, 3, 4. (1927–1929).

Vol. IV, Nos. 1, 2, 3. (1930).

Vol. XV, No. 2. (1941).

African Studies: Vol. I, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4. (1942).

Vol. II, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4. (1943).

Vol. III, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4. (1944).

Vol. IV, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4. (1945).

* * *

In the June Number of "African Studies" last year, on page 94, Dr. Jeffreys discussed the possible origin of the word **Munumutapa** or **Monomotapa**. Reference might be made to an article by C. M. Doke entitled "The Earliest Records of Bantu", which appeared in *Bantu Studies*, Vol. XII (1938). A footnote to page 138 of that volume, commenting on the early Portuguese recording of *Menomotapam*, *Benametapa* and *Benamotapa*, ran as follows: "Originally the word was evidently a title, *Mylene-mutapo* (pl. *vene-mitapo*) meaning 'Owner or Lord of the Mine(s)'. *Mutapo* (or *umutapo*) is a Bantu word primarily indicating 'metalliferous ore'."

* * *

The first **Report of the Inter-University Council** for Higher Education in the Colonies revealed that in the first year of its existence the Council has tackled these two tasks with considerable success. It has nominated for appointment

the Principal or Principal-Designate for Makerere College, East Africa (Dr. W. D. Lamont), for the proposed University College of the West Indies (Dr. T. W. J. Taylor), for Gordon Memorial College, Khartoum (Colonel L. C. Wilcher), for the proposed University College of Malaya (Dr. G. V. Allen), for the proposed University College at Ibadan, Nigeria (Dr. K. Mellanby) and for the proposed University College in the Gold Coast (Mr. D. B. Balme). The Council has had several conferences with the Principals, four of whom were together in London during June–July 1947.

* * *

Mass Education Experiments. Among notable experiments in Africa is the mass education drive started by a Mission in 1945 at Mindolo copper-mine compound in N. Rhodesia. With the co-operation of the mine managers a literacy census was taken, and the co-operation and confidence of the tribal leaders was won by a full explanation of plans. Supervisors were trained to give individual teaching in the compound and a building was provided for classes. A literacy test was devised and certificates awarded. At the same time English classes were given for the already literate, discussion groups started and a library built. Since the campaign began over 2,500 people have learnt to read; the number of literate women is increasing and there are 23 full-time trained instructors and 45 part-time workers.

Another remarkable campaign was begun at Udi in E. Nigeria in 1944. This scheme was initiated and organized by a District Officer. The campaign was in the nature of an experiment to find out whether Africans had the will and energy to carry through a campaign in mass education without extensive financial backing from outside. Instruction was given in schools, market-places and grass-shelters. In some places literacy teaching developed into a village improvement scheme, and reading rooms, maternity homes, dispensaries and co-operative shops were built and furnished very largely by African initiative and efforts. At the end of 1946 over 30 communities had embarked on development plans. Several new projects were begun in 1947.

BOOKS IN REVIEW

Ngombe Grammar. E. W. PRICE. (1947.)
Roneed foolscap, 88 pp.

In a foreword to this work, Professor Ida Ward describes it as "a complete break-away" from traditional treatment and terminology of a Bantu language; and goes on to state that "it handles the grammar analytically by an adaptation of the technique developed at the School of Oriental and African Studies by Dr. Malcolm Guthrie".

After going through this most interesting study, however, one cannot help feeling that here is a disquisition on grammatical method, rather than an actual grammar of the Ngombe language—one is intrigued by many of the suggestions, but left with a hunger for the real grammar. Despite the avowed object of discarding foreign moulds and terminology, and the revolutionary handling, the final result does not have the "tang" of Bantu about it, and I seriously doubt whether this method gets us any nearer to really "thinking black" than did Dan Crawford, whose book might have been better titled "Thinking Crawford".

First for some of the good things in this *Ngombe Grammar*. Dr. Price has done well to emphasize and work out the function of tone throughout. Tone, expressed by "high" and "low" is most important in Bantu languages of the Congo. Ngombe and languages of that area are closer to Sudanic and probably more influenced thereby than are the Bantu languages of the south, and tone plays a most significant part in their grammatical and semantic structure. The phonetic system is relatively simple; the open vowel symbols *e* and *ɔ* are introduced correctly, and the only "foreign" consonantal sounds seem to be the double closures *pk* and *bg* of Sudanic origin. Though word-division is not discussed as such, the author has followed an almost correct conjunctive method. He does "slip-up" on this however rather seriously in regard to his "particles", of which more anon. The profuse idiomatic sentence examples are of enormous value, and, to my

mind, constitute the most important contribution in this work.

The classification of the parts of speech is into four categories: (1) Nominals (independent and dependent), (2) Verbals, (3) Particles, and (4) Ideophones. At first glance one immediately asks: "What of Interjections?" No provision has been made for them. But let us look at some of the definitions. "A nominal is a word consisting of prefix and stem; the stem is immutable, while the prefix may be fixed or may alternate. The group includes the equivalents of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and some conjunctions in English." Then a verbal is described as "a word in which grammatical inflexions take place both after and before a central core (or radical) which contains its inherent meaning. In this way it differs from a nominal in which alternations of form only occur in front of the core or stem." This may apply to a large extent in Ngombe, but what of noun suffixes in South-Eastern or even Central Bantu? And what of locative "adverbial" inflexion by suffix in Eastern and South-Eastern Bantu? It is all very well to lump together what have been hitherto termed nouns, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs into one category "nominals", because there is basically a similarity of form, but the great mistake of this thesis is that "form" has been permitted to oust completely "function". Surely the first consideration in a grammatical classification is syntactical—function; then the secondary consideration for sub-classification is form. In this method, before us now, the cart is before the horse, and unfortunately the horse has been left in the stable!

But having decided on this new and revolutionary classification and terminology, the author finds that he needs to recognize practically all the "parts of speech" which normal Bantu grammar has hitherto employed. See this:

"Nominals" (i.e. substantives) are divided by him into "Independent nominals" (i.e. nouns

and adverbs) and "Dependent nominals", (a) "Adnominals" (i.e. adjectives, etc.) and (b) "Pronominals" (i.e. pronouns), which latter are sub-divided into "Substitute Pronominals" and "Selector Pronominals" (a very strange term for what we well understand to be demonstratives).

On p. 18 appear "Words used to emphasize nominals", and a list of special words is given, but we are not told what "part of speech" such a word as *kanga* is! What, too, is meant by "a *kíná* word" (foot of p. 19)?

Objection might be taken, too, to a very arbitrary use of certain established grammatical terms. Noun classes are treated correctly, as does Meinhof, each separate prefix indicating a separate class; but a grouping of two classes to bring singular and plural together is here (p. 10) called a "gender", an unjustifiable use of this term. Similarly the term "tense" (p. 25) "is used to describe any series of verbals in which the subjectival concord alone is the alternating factor". The original significance of tense as "time" is quite overlooked in this.

Surely the author is wrong in terming the objectival concord "the substitute object" (p. 22). It is not an object, not a separate word. He correctly uses the term "subjectival concord" (p. 21), and slips elsewhere into calling this an "objectival infix" (p. 25), when it is not an infix but a prefix, for he states (p. 33) that it may be "the first syllable of the verbal"! On p. 69, too, he classifies it among the concords.

But perhaps the main weakness of this new approach to Bantu grammar is revealed when the author comes to treat of his fourth category "the Particle". Meinhof, too, laid himself open to serious criticism in his use of this term: the particle, a convenient "funk-hole" for whatever he could not fit in anywhere else, containing a miscellany of so-called prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, etc. In this Ngombe Grammar we find the same tendency. Here is the strange definition: "A particle is a word of fixed form and no intrinsic meaning which serves to link nominals to verbals, or main clause to dependent clause, in certain recognized circumstances". A kind of stateless, displaced person! Included

under this category are what we understand by locative prefixes and other adverbial formatives, as well as some self-standing conjunctions. The weakness here is that the author has not satisfied himself as to the correct word-division. In par. 63 he states: "In current orthography, they are written as separate words". But are they really so? On p. 47 he writes *d* separate but *ádi* and *di* joined. The example of *sa* at the foot of the page, where it is infixed, is conclusive. On p. 48 he states that *na* "when used with Substitute Pronominals . . . behaves like a concord"; and he writes *na mwána* but *nambi*. Referring to two "negative particles" the author states: "They are not true particles in that they relate only to the nominal or verbal which follows them, and it is probable that they would be more accurately represented by hyphenation with the following word. However custom has maintained them as separate words, and they are treated as such here". Such concession to custom (when it is so obviously wrong) is strange in this revolutionary work! Of the nine "particles" listed on p. 46, the first four are definitely formatives; the next three and the ninth are possibly conjunctions; while the eighth is probably an adverb, which may at times function as a conjunction.

It is well known that certain Bantu nouns and pronouns can function as adverbs, but there is ample evidence that Bantu languages also have radical adverbs. Whether original or not, it is certain that Bantu has developed conjunctions, and I find it very difficult to agree with the author (p. 85) that such words as *benge* (in order that) and *nongo* (although) are nominals. This is too much to swallow!

One could find other details, on which to comment, but it is always much easier to criticize than to pioneer a new method. There is much in this grammatical work to shew that considerable thought has been given to it, but the new revolutionary idea has obscured other things, and is established upon too insecure a basis. There is no objection to using any new terminology if it will facilitate study. No grammatical method is the only correct one *per se*, and one can sympathize with the use of such terms as nominals,

adnominals, pronominals, verbals etc., provided due respect is paid for the *function* of adverbs, conjunctions, formatives, enclitics, and inflexions of words. The basis of all this must be a correct word-division (for instance, on p. 52, *-ko* is correctly recorded as an enclitic, but *ded* is probably a separate word, an adverb); and syntactical function must be carefully studied.

Ngombe has obviously lost a lot of Bantu inflexion, and this has made such a treatment as we have here more applicable to it than to the average run of Bantu languages. In Ngombe there seem to be few special rules of adverbial formation, though some are observable when the inseparable character of several of the so-called "particles" is recognized. There seems to be much less variety in the formation of locatives, and an absence of suffixal formations to noun stems. The claim for this method however is that "This study of Ngombe is an attempt at a systematic analysis of a Bantu language" (Preface), and that it is the technique used at the London School of Oriental and African Languages. To me it is unsatisfying.

Dr. Price's work, however, is the most important grammatical study of Ngombe yet carried out. M. Guilmin produced in French his *Grammaire Lingombe* in 1925, and in 1937 E. A. and L. Ruskin published some 60 pages of *Notes on the Grammar of Lingombe* followed by vocabularies. Back in 1903 W. H. Stapleton had included Ngombe in his *Comparative Handbook of Congo Languages*. The author of this work under review contributed a short paper to *African Studies* in 1944 on "The Tonal Structure of the Ngombe Verb". This present work contains most valuable information on the Language, and is certainly most welcome and stimulating, even if it fails to convince of the advantages of the system under which the grammar is worked out.

C.M.D.

The Distribution of the Semitic and Cushitic Languages of Africa. M. A. BRYAN, (International African Institute, 1947). 36 pp., 4/6.

This publication marks a further step in the Institute's programme for the preparation of a

"Handbook of African Languages". It is an outline of the available information on the Semitic and Cushitic languages put out to assist field work, invite correction and addition, and act as a first step in unravelling the tangle of linguistic types in the area. The classification of the Semitic section is relatively clear. That of the Cushitic languages, divided into northern, central and eastern zones with group sub-divisions presents a very complicated picture, which will no doubt be further elucidated as information is available. Miss Bryan has studied an enormous amount of literature on these languages, as the bibliography on pp. 23-35 reveals. Her compilation of this material shews painstaking research, and this publication is a valuable document on which further work will be based. A detailed folding map accompanies the work.

C.M.D.

An African Aristocracy. HILDA KUPER. (Published for the International African Institute by the Oxford University Press.) Text 242 pp. excluding pages for Bibliography and Index and Map of Swaziland. Price 30/- net.

This is an important addition to the slender literature on the Swazi.

The author states her qualifications: she spent over two years in Swaziland and kept in touch with the Territory subsequently by short visits to it and by contacts with Swazi living or working on the Witwatersrand. Her headquarters in the Territory were Lobamba the Swazi capital and residence of the queen mother (*indlovukati*) of the Swazi. Her researches were sponsored by the Paramount Chief who supplied her with a "guide philosopher and friend" and the Paramount Chief's support undoubtedly gave her access to sources of information and a prestige which is not the lot of the ordinary anthropologist. This book is therefore of special significance and the matter contained in it deserves special respect.

The author makes it clear that she has not made use of all the material she collected and that that which she used "is co-ordinated and presented from the approach of rank and status—the social

valuation of individuals and groups". She also warns readers that "it deals exclusively with traditional orientation and therefore involves an arbitrary limitation". She promises a further publication which will be eagerly awaited.

The study of the Swazi is described alliteratively as "an analysis of the privileges of pigmentation and pedigree" and in the conclusion the author justifies her approach and says :

"To interpret the Swazi culture type, I analysed its characteristic social units (the polygynous patriarchal family; the hierarchy of clans and lineages; the dual monarchy; the age grades; the groups of specialists), and discussed their focal behaviour and associated beliefs. The consistency of the pattern then appeared as the result of the interaction of concrete processes in a historical setting; there was no need to resort for explanation to the 'selectiveness of a culture', or to any vague 'purpose' or 'goal' or 'drive'; the psychological qualities were the products of, and in turn influenced, the structure and activities."

She goes on to say :

"A valid interpretation of social facts must be inclusive and logically consistent. From the material presented in this book, an attempt might be made to show that the Swazi are orientated towards warfare and aggression; emphasis could be laid on the training of males, or regimental exploits and rewards, the privileges of warriors, the religious bias in favour of the paternal (warrior) line. But some facts—the rank of royal women, the privileges of young princes beyond the military sphere—would conflict with such an interpretation, and other facts—the influence of kinship ties and the rating of clans and lineages—would find no place in it."

It must remain a matter for speculation whether Mrs. Kuper's conclusions would have been the same had she started and continued her researches other than under the wing of the Paramount Chief and the queen mother.

The second and third chapters give a competent historical background recounting first the growth of the Swazi to nationhood from the period of groups of Embo Nguni clans and then dealing

with the repercussions of the entry of Europeans into Swazi political organization, the unrest at the turn of last century, the sad story of the concession hunting and the eventual acceptance by the Swazi of the present position.

Part II of the book is entitled "The basis of conservatism" and deals first with the tempo of peasant life. The next chapter which describes the political hierarchy is a valuable contribution and the author turns to good account her intimate knowledge of the royal villages, and describes the somewhat unusual division of power between the king and his mother, the position in the hierarchy of the princes, leading commoners elevated to high administrative posts, and the two councils—the inner council or *Liqogo* and the general council or *Libandla*. She lays stress on two important and imperfectly understood features in the Swazi constitution: (1) that all Swazi officials hold office for life and are only dismissed for treason or witchcraft. "Incompetence, habitual drunkenness, stupidity, or weakness of character are qualities that are criticized, but so long as an official is loyal he retains his position. The only way to counteract his defects is to appoint capable men as his assistants." (2) That the character of tribal councils is often erroneously regarded as more formally constituted than is actually the case, and that their functions like their personnel are not specialized or precise. The author notes the power of councils to rebuke or fine chiefs and that a chief takes his stand from his subjects' wishes and is directed by, rather than directs, their opinions. This fact is somewhat damaging to her thesis of the privileges of pedigree and throws into relief the strong democratic bias in Swazi society.

In the chapter on the ritualization of the king Mrs. Kuper is on ground which she knows thoroughly and she deals with the subject in a masterly fashion.

The successor to a Swazi polygynist is not publicly known during his father's lifetime and Chapter VII describes the mechanics of choosing an heir and the factors which are taken into consideration in making the choice.

The author discusses food, kinship and its present relation to localities, the age-class system which has grown out of the military organization of the nation, and in the chapter on wealth rightly describes Swazi technology as crude "and unable to support permanently a large number of people in activities that do not contribute directly to the food supply". Mrs. Kuper comes to the conclusion that wealth and political power usually coincide: political power creating wealth.

The longest chapter in the book is devoted to the *Incwala* which the author describes as the dominant national ceremony. She gives a more detailed description of the ceremony than has hitherto been available and then rejects the interpretations of other writers and gives as her own that it is "first and foremost a ceremony which, as the Swazi say, aims at 'strengthening kingship', at 'showing kingship', 'to make stand the nation'." There is much force in her arguments but they do leave much in the ceremony unexplained, e.g. the references to "the child king" in the song and to the hatred for the king which constantly recur. Her explanation of the "hatred" theme as "a thrust against all who may not join in the *Incwala*" is too facile and one is left generally with the impression that a very complex ceremony, rich in ritual and historical accretions, has been too narrowly interpreted to fit in with the author's thesis that the dominant orientation of Swazi society is rank.

No review of this book would be complete without a reference to the rendering of the Swazi words. The author says she has used the orthography decided upon by a conference held in 1933. Careless proof reading may account for "Ludönga" on p. 20, instead of "Ludvonga" but the constant source of irritation is the faulty rendering of the Swazi equivalents of words commonly written in the Zulu orthography. Thus *tikhondzi* on p. 17 is derived from *khonza* and the Swazi rendering should be *tikhonti*. Similarly *sigodsi* on p. 46 should be *sigodzi* and *tifundzi* on p. 57 should be *tifunti*. There is no excuse either for writing *Mshengu* on p. 61 and *Umshengu* on p. 58.

B.A.M.

The Influence of Islam on a Sudanese Religion. S. GREENBERG.

Published as *Monograph X of the American Ethnological Society*, by J. J. Augustin in New York, 1946, consists of 70 pages of text, plus three of bibliography but no index. The monograph is well produced. There is one misprint on p. 54 where "spiri" is written for "spirit".

The monograph is the result of eleven months of field work in and around Kano, city of Northern Nigeria under the auspices of the Social Science Research Council of the North-Western University as a basis for a thesis for a doctorate of philosophy. The object of the monograph is to study the effect of a culture-contact between the Mohammedan religion and paganism. For this purpose the first chapter is devoted to the historical background and is compiled from the usual accredited sources and so is not in the nature of field work.

The second chapter is headed "The Pagan Hausa". As Hausa is a linguistic term like Bantu or Aryan or Swahili the title is hardly appropriate.¹ As a sub-heading to this chapter is "The Maguzawa". These Maguzawa are composed of Kutambawa and of Katsina peoples. One learns however that Maguzawa is a generic Hausa term for all Hausa-speaking pagans. One is a little suspicious of the use of so wide a term for a localized group of peoples composed of at least two tribes. If Maguzawa is a Hausa term for all Hausa-speaking pagans, one might equate it to the English word "apostates" or "renegades", and it is thus a religious, not a tribal, distinction. However, Bargery's *Hausa Dictionary* gives Maguzawa as "a member of the Pagan Maguzawa tribe".

This chapter is then devoted to a sketch of a compound among these peoples shewing the kinship system. In this sketch one can see the infiltration of Islamic influence. Thus twins receive not stereotyped pagan names but the stereotyped Moslem names, "Hasan and Hasana". The pagan village was the political unit. All

¹ Hausa is the *lingua franca* of the Western Sudan (MEINHOF, C., *African Languages*, 46, London, 1915).

political life is now dominated or controlled by Fulani. The pagan village-head has to be approved by the Fulani headman before he may take up office.

In the chapter on religion one is left with the impression that because the pagans pay more attention to the *hiska* or spirits of the air than to Allah, that they are thereby continuing pagan practices. It may be that they are, but Mohammedan countries are notoriously so full of spirits whether of saints or of jinns that there is also a possibility that this spirit worship has been adapted from the Mohammedans. The author hints as much on p. 60.

The mention of a double-headed serpent is of interest. It is also found among the Bamun where its use as decorative motif is restricted to vessels for use by the king. Double-headed serpents were also found in decorations on the walls of the tombs of the kings in Ancient Egypt.

It is refreshing to note that the author has the correct concept of witchcraft, namely that it is a belief that certain persons have an innate power that enables them to destroy the "souls" of others. Such "soul" destruction ensures the complete annihilation of the individual both in this world and in the world to come.

It is also interesting to note that no mention is made of a trial by ordeal in connection with witchcraft. If it is true that trial by ordeal is no longer used, then here is a good instance of acculturation: the effect of Islamic influence. "Mohammedan law forbids trial by ordeal" (HAMBLY, W. O., *Culture Areas of Nigeria*, 460, Chicago, 1935).

The author mentions that the worshippers of the spirit, *Dan Galadima*, always carry cowries for gambling. But he does not mention how many cowries are carried or used in gambling. If the number is "five" then here is an instance of a much older acculturation. I have shown that the use of cowry shells in West Africa is directly due to Egyptian influence (JEFFREYS, M. D. W., "The Diffusion of Cowries and Egyptian Culture in Africa", *American Anthropologist*, January-March 1948). If the number of cowry shells used was five then I have shown that this number as a

gambling unit was used in the basin of the Mediterranean (JEFFREYS, M. D. W., "Cha-Cha" *Nigerian Field*, December 1943).

On p. 49 in a footnote the author writes: "The use of kinship terms to express the relationship between the god and the person he possesses is common in West Africa. Among the Yoruba, the children of a particular *orisha* are called "children of the *orisha* . . ." But one can go further. The word *orisha* (*alushi* among the adjacent Ibo) breaks up into *ori* = *alo* = children and *sha* = *shi* = spirit, god; and so *orisha* (*alushi*) means "children of god".

The aim of the author is to show that Islamic influence has spread as a result of aboriginal inhabitants becoming literate Mohammedan mallams and acting as proselytisers by travelling around the land and setting up their own schools. The result of this culture-contact has been as he points out, following Malinowski, to create new cultural features not present in either the pagan or Islamic cultures. The author would have been more convincing had he tabulated in a summary what he considered were these new features. The clearest instance is the amalgamation of a pagan deity with the Fulani "inna" cult.

The claim anent the *hiska* is not so convincing.
M. D. W. JEFFREYS.

Land Law and Custom in the Colonies.

C. K. MEEK, M.A., D.Sc. With an Introduction by Lord Hailey. (London: Oxford University Press.) xxvi+337 pp., 21/-.

This volume gives the kind of information which will be very helpful to Colonial administrators, lawyers, economists and sociologists. It gives in detail clear accounts of the various systems of land tenure and laws relating to land to be found in the Colonial territories of the British Empire. Lord Hailey's introduction points out how the programme of Colonial development has brought out the fact that "the increasing of primary production still remains the basic problem in any endeavour to improve the general standard

of life in the Colonies" and that in consequence, there must be a proper appreciation of the effects different forms of land tenure have upon the economy of a country, and also—not less important—upon its social life. Social advancement in any country depends upon the soundness of its economy, including its agrarian economy. The emergence of an exchange economy from a subsistence economy may and usually does require in due course changes in forms of land tenure, but the social life of the people may be harmed by wrongly directed changes as well as by failure to effect any changes at all. Africa is undergoing profound changes—economic, social, political, and cultural—and it will require statesmanship of the highest order to prevent these changes from causing chaos and upheavals. The comprehensive character of this survey provides a wealth of material for the comparative study which will enable the statesman to be alive to the various possibilities of directive action. But it is necessary to warn the statesman that, as the author of this book says in a footnote (p. 1), "land tenure cannot be studied solely from the legal standpoint", but that it must be viewed in the light of the social organization of the people concerned and that full account must be taken of the social and economic forces—from without as well as within—which are operating. The great gap which exists between the African society and Western civilization makes the task of helping Africa and Africans to effect the great transitions very difficult and fraught with much danger to the African.

It is clear that African society cannot survive unaided the assaults which modern civilization makes upon it. To leave the African to "develop along his own lines" is to condemn him to destruction. On the other hand, to ignore "his own lines" may be to make him a stranger in his own land.

In the Union, there has been no study made of the social and economic aspects of Native land tenure and of their relationship to the changes that are taking place, and must increasingly take place, in the South African agrarian economy. Rogers' *Native Administration in the Union of South Africa* gives an account of Native land tenure

under the various Union laws relating to the ownership and occupation of land by Natives, but no study has been made of the effects of these laws upon African society. Schapera's *Land Tenure in Bechuanaland* supplies considerable material relating to Bechuanaland. In the Union, assumption by the European pioneers of the ownership of land hitherto held by Natives, and the imposition of European-made laws upon Native tribes have profoundly affected Native society. A study of Native customary land tenure in the Union, and the effects of European ownership upon it and upon Native society would prove of the greatest value in any effort to draw up a sound land policy in the Native areas.

The need for a revision of land policy in Native areas in the Union will become clearer as the Native Affairs Department presses forward with its programme for the development of the areas. As Dr. Meek points out in his chapter on "Factors in Land-holding" "the conditions under which land is held are of far-reaching importance for the development of agriculture", and the various factors which determine land tenure have to be taken into account—the character of the crops, climate, religion, the rights of chiefs, inheritance, the rights of women, and other semi-legal features, as well as new features such as marketing, introduced by a change-over to an exchange economy.

In the Union, Native law and custom in regard to land tenure have been profoundly affected by (1) the assumption by the Crown of sovereignty over Native areas; (2) the restriction of tribal land-holding to defined areas and the consequent over-crowding of the areas by animal and human population; (3) the introduction of individual tenure, under the quit-rent system in the Ciskei, Transkei, and Natal; (4) the direct administration by the Department of Native Affairs of land acquired by the South African Native Trust adjacent to Native tribal areas and occupied by tribal Natives; (5) regulations introduced by the Government in regard to the use of land and trees in Native areas and in Trust land.

In many Native areas of the Union, the shortage

of land has resulted in decay in the power and prestige of the tribal hierarchy from the local headman to the chief. The necessity to protect the indigenous trees has caused the Government to mark off areas as "forest reserves" and to prohibit the cutting of trees in them, so that what wood remains in Native areas has ceased to be common property. Government policy in the consolidation of allotments is interfering with the custom of allowing a kraal to have holdings in separate allotments to ensure that one at least has fertile soil. Land left uncultivated may be forfeited which is contrary to customary law, in which there is no prescription.

A people who have a tradition of shifting cultivation, and even of extensive "trekking", do not have the attachment to a particular bit of land and to actual ownership which people who have been crowded and settled within a defined area have developed. When trees, water, honey, wild fruit, and wild animals are regarded as common property, and when cattle satisfy the desire for prestige, it is no wonder that the African "views the country round him as all one unit, all accessible to him and all ready to supply his needs, trees to be used for wood, ash for his gardens, building materials or machinery, and wild plants, game and fish for food". (RICHARDS, *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*, p. 234.)

But "trekking" is no longer possible in the Union to either White or Black. The Africans are restricted by legislation to land occupation within territorial limits far too narrow for their existing methods of cultivation and for their cattle. Their land is being ruined by over-grazing and by wrong methods of cultivation and drastic changes are immediately necessary to save the Native areas from destruction.

The inability of the Native areas to maintain their population has made the African more dependent upon employment outside the areas and, in consequence, the interest in land, as apart from cattle, which permanent settlement in a defined area might have induced, has not been developed. Moreover, it has altered his attitude towards tribal duties. Customary rights to land were

"based upon membership of a community, entitling every member to the beneficial use of community lands" (HAILEY, *An African Survey*, p. 830), and these rights involved obligations in service and kind. But long absences from home—absences which have tended to become more prolonged because of rising levels of living, and the inability of the Native areas to yield the returns necessary to maintain their population—have resulted in failure to carry out traditional duties to the tribe and the tribal hierarchy. Thus the foundations of Native land tenure are being destroyed. While land available for Native occupation is inadequate to provide for the natural increasing of population, and the traditional right of every tribesman to accommodation on the land is reducing the power and prestige of the tribal authority, economic pressure is making it more difficult for the tribesman who has land to fulfil the traditional conditions of his tenure of the land. Moreover, it is becoming economically unsound to have so large a percentage of the Native population in the land, and the re-organization of the Native areas with larger holdings for a small population permanently and fully occupied on the land has become imperative. Membership of a clan can no longer ensure rights to land, and the traditional form of land tenure must give way to new forms more in keeping with the economic necessities of the times. Such changes must have profound effects upon the social and political organization of tribal life.

There seems good reason to believe that one effect of white supremacy over the African people has been to hold back the spontaneous reaction of African society to situations demanding changes in law and custom. Dr. Audrey Richards says (*Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia*, p. 228) that "the conservatism of the tribal African has, I think, been exaggerated. In reality, most of the Bantu have been changing their agricultural practices in contrast with the surrounding peoples for generations, and a good many experiments are actually made in the course of an individual's life..." In the Union, the tribal authorities wait upon the Government's orders to deal with the changing situation, partly because

they feel that the Government has all the authority and partly because the situation has changed too much for them to understand or to deal with without help or guidance.

What changes have to be made in Native land tenure to meet the changing needs must be considered in relation to each situation, and Dr. Meek's work brings out the wide variety of forms of tenure now to be found in the various British Colonies.

In the Union, the Africans are reaching out for freehold tenure because the severe restrictions upon Native land occupation, fear of arbitrary action by the European Government, and impatience with tribal authority have made them avid for the security which individual freehold tenure seems to give. They will burden themselves with heavy debt to secure a piece of land in freehold. Until the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936 made it illegal, Africans combined in syndicates to buy land in freehold, because only by such combination of funds was it possible to acquire land—apart from tribal levies authorized by the Government—on the scale which would induce the European owner to sell to Natives. They did not bother about sub-division with individual title for each member of the syndicate, being satisfied with enough individual holding for subsistence cultivation and common grazing for stock. As this resulted in later years in great difficulties in tracing the actual owners, the Government decided to prohibit purchases by syndicates of Natives. These purchases were analogous to the purchases made by tribal authorities with Government approval, to which tribesmen contribute under a tribal levy, also approved by the Government. The purchasers were, however, Africans who had become de-tribalised or preferred to have land independent of tribal control.

Individual tenure is, of course, traditional in Africa. As Dr. Meek puts it "... all over Africa every married man is commonly entitled to a plot of land for cultivation, and it is not necessary to envisage the break-up of the African family system in order that its members may exercise individual rights. But under the Native African system land cannot simply be treated as a private

personal possession which may be bought or sold—it can only pass from one person to another by way of inheritance, gift or loan... Native customary law limits the amount of land that anyone may hold to the amount that he requires for the subsistence of himself and his family..." (p. 96).

When there was land enough to provide for the needs of the extended family—the head of the kraal and each homestead—this system was adequate. But in many of the Native areas of the Union, the land available is not enough for this. Under the quit-rent system in the Ciskei and Transkei it has not been possible to allot more than 4 morgen (a little over 8 acres) to each head of family, and many families are without any at all. In the new areas acquired by the South African Native Trust, the average individual holding is 5 morgen. As the pressure on land increases, the land units become smaller and tend to acquire commercial value. There will be increasing pressure for individual title.

In the past it has been held that individual freehold title is essential to progressive farming. Arthur Young in his *Travels in France during the years 1787, 1788 and 1789* attributed the difference between the conditions of farming in Languedoc and those in other districts of France to the freehold system in the former, where "an activity has been here that has swept away all difficulties before it and has clothed the very rocks with verdure. It would be an insult to common sense to ask the cause. The enjoyment of property must have done it. Give a man the sense of possession of a bleak rock and he will turn it into a garden..." Another famous remark of Young's was "the magic of property turns sand into gold". Although Dr. Meek quotes these sayings, he points out the dangers of freehold, and he says that "it would appear that the whole weight of agricultural opinion is directly opposed to the freehold principle".

The land in Africa and Africans on it cannot be saved by the traditional forms of land tenure and cultivation. The plough, which was once thought to be the best weapon for the African, has been found to be too dangerous to be used

without direction, and individual freehold tenure, once thought to be the quickest way to progressive farming, may prove to be a serious hindrance of agricultural improvement.

Just as the woman with the hoe has given place to the ox and plough, so in many places these must give way to the tractor. Africa is being drawn so fast into world economy that large scale development on lines such as those of the Gezira area of the Sudan and Tanganyika are inevitable, and changes in land tenure are bound to follow. What will happen to the African and African society? Will African tribal authorities have any place in the new agrarian economy and administration? Will inheritance and other aspects of customary land tenure disappear, and will African society as we have known it be destroyed in new political and economic organization? As Dr. Meek says freedom "is a prime factor in the maintenance of social stability" and it is fundamentally important that the economic development of Africa shall be the means and the occasion for

ensuring all the freedoms to the African, so that he may maintain the dignity and poise which have been so attractive a feature of African society.

This review of Dr. Meek's very valuable and interesting book may well close, as his book does, with a quotation from Dr. Felix Keesing's book on *The South Areas in the Modern World*: "In all such questions of land policy a primary need is for governing authorities to be expert in the traditional land usages within their jurisdictions and also to be in the closest touch with the trends of change under modern conditions . . . There can be no quick solutions, and for the most part resolving them depends on long-term education rather than immediate action. Indigenous land ideas and customs are an integral part of the whole cultural and psychological fabric now being tested out for its survival; nevertheless, upon the intelligent handling of land matters depends in large measure the future stability and social welfare of the peoples."

J. D. RHEINALLT-JONES